

Some Reflections on "Hinduism"

What we now call "Hinduism" is a product of the centuries between Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) and the rise of the Gupta Empire in 320 CE. It was also during these centuries that Buddhism emerged as a major religious system with support from Asoka Maurya (269-232 BCE), expanded into Southeast Asia and the Hellenized region of Bactria beyond the Hindu Kush, and gave rise to the new form of Mahayana Buddhism. The co-formation of both Hinduism and Buddhism within the same time period and cultural setting is unlikely to be coincidence, and requires that we consider these two inclusive religious systems as interactive parts of the same dynamic process.

Before this period lies a long history of cultural development in India that began with Stone Age tribal cultures from as early as 250,000 BCE, the introduction of village agriculture along the western watershed of the Indus River by around 6,000 BCE, the development of regional village cultures in the Indus Valley, and the coalescence of these cultures in the urban Indus Civilization around 2500 BCE. Between 2500 and 1750 BCE, expanding outward from the early urban centers of Mohenjodaro and Harappa in the Indus Valley, the Indus urban culture spread in a network of regional towns and villages northward along the Indus tributaries and across the intervening plains to the upper Yamuna and Ganges valleys and southward into the Indus delta region, the Saurashtra peninsula, the

valleys of the Narmada and Tapti rivers, and onto the Deccan plateau as far as the upper reaches of the Godavari River. At its height, in the first quarter of the second millennium BCE, this urban civilization extended from northern outposts in the Oxus River valley to the Deccan village of Daimabad in the south and from southwestern ports along the Arabian Sea to villages in the Himalayan foothills and in the Doab east of the Yamuna River.

The process of agricultural settlement and urban cultural expansion was the first major dynamic in the formation of Indian civilization. Externally, it led to coastal sea trade westward to the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia and perhaps -- though the evidence is less clear -- to the African coast as well. Internally, it involved the gradual extension of agricultural settlements and pastoralism into regions previously populated only by tribal peoples. Little cultural effect seems to have resulted from the external trade contacts, which ended when the urban Indus Civilization collapsed after 1750 BCE. The internal contacts between agriculturists, pastoralists, and tribal peoples, however, initiated a dynamic cultural interchange that has persisted down to the present day.

Archaeological evidence of early pastoral and tribal traditions is scarce and scattered, but a number of finds in the Krishna and Tungabhadra river valleys of northern Karnataka and eastern Andhra Pradesh (type-site Utnur) indicate the presence of neolithic pastoral peoples in the region by the late third millennium BCE (Fairervis, Roots of Ancient India, 2nd edn rev, 323-333). Sites within the regional culture complex show a progression from seasonal

settlements marked by cattle stockades and cattle-dung ashmounds to more permanent habitation sites, with a parallel progression to more complex means of subsistence including sheep herding and the cultivation of millet. Pottery types associated with these sites from the earliest stages suggest ties to northeastern Iran or western India, as does the presence of clay figurines of bulls, and the presence of a variety of pottery at the earliest levels points to prior contacts with village cultures elsewhere. Burial with grave-goods within houses or near the settlement area was the general norm, although the type of burial changed over time at some sites from fractional burial to extended burials in a number of interconnected vessels, and at some of the more developed sites children were buried in globular womb-like urns in an embryonic position, usually inside the houses.

Although these early pastoral settlements in the central Deccan began within the time frame of the Indus Civilization and continued long after its decline, they clearly represent a cultural pattern outside and no doubt older than the urban Indus system. They can probably best be thought of as the leading edge of an expansion of pastoralism and cultivation that began during the pre-urban period of western Indian development when a variety of village cultures and pastoral tribes populated the Baluchistan and Afghanistan highlands and had begun to move down into the Indus valley, most likely between around 5,000 and 3,000 BCE -- dates that correspond also to the postulated separation of the proto-Elamite and proto-Dravidian language traditions when the

forebearers of the latter moved out of the Iranian plateau into the highlands of western India (David McAlpin, Proto-Elamo Dravidian, p. 134). Evidence of parallel expansions of pre-urban cultivators into regions further north can be seen in the Banas River culture (type-site Ahar) in southern Rajasthan, which existed alongside the urban Indus Civilization to its south in Gujarat but never became part of it, and the pre-urban culture in Kalibangan on the Ghaggar River in northern Rajasthan, which was replaced by a subsequent Indus city on the same site in the early urban period.

All of these early expansions of pastoralists and cultivators seem to have had their ultimate origin in the agricultural development of West Asia that encompassed the region from Southern Turkmenistan to western India, and all reflect their possession of some part of the cattle-sheep-goats-wheat-barley complex that characterized that development. Quite separate from this West Asian pattern, however, there is evidence of an indigenous Indian Neolithic culture along the Belan River south of present-day Allahabad (and less than 50 miles from the Ganges River) that represents a transition from Mesolithic hunting and gathering in the period between 9,000-7,000 BCE (at Chopani Mando) to Neolithic agricultural villages at nearby Koldihawa and Mahagara less than two miles away that flourished between 7,000 and 4,500 BCE. This is so far the earliest agricultural village culture discovered in India, and is the product of developments that can be seen not only along the Belan but also at a number of related Mesolithic sites just across the Ganges to the north. It is not only the age of these sites

that distinguishes them, however, but the fact that their transition to agriculture was based not on wheat and barley cultivation as in West Asia but on the local domestication of rice -- the first known instance of this in South Asia, and the beginning of what would later become the primary food source for Gangetic civilization.

Evidence of wild rice has been found at several of the Mesolithic sites in the region along with bones of wild cattle, sheep, and goats, so it appears that the entire Neolithic agricultural complex was the product of local domestication of wild food sources. Local hand-made pottery also began during the Mesolithic period, and its presence in the pre-domestication sites before 7,000 BCE makes it not only the earliest known pottery in India but among the earliest in the world. The completed cultural assemblage by the Neolithic period included several new pottery styles along with the cultivation of domesticated rice, domesticated sheep, goats, and cattle (the latter evidenced by a cattle-pen at one of the sites), perhaps also domesticated horses, and the hunting of wild cattle, deer, and boar. (B. K. Thapar, Recent Archaeological Discoveries in India, pp. 38-42).

The subsequent history of this particular cultural complex is unclear, but it is certain that the main achievements of the Neolithic period in the Ganges valley region, especially the domestication of rice and cattle, were carried over into the Chalcolithic cultures of the Gangetic region that followed from the mid-fifth millennium onward. It is likely, moreover, that these Gangetic cultures were the ultimate origin of the cultivated rice

that appeared in the late Indus urban period, especially in Gujarat, perhaps via the Chambal valley and the Banas River culture or by direct contact of outlying Indus settlements with Ganges/Yamuna valley rice cultivators. Rice remained only a marginal factor in the Indus Civilization, however, because the center of its urban economy was in the wheat and barley region of the Indus valley and western India, and the rice-growing cultures of the Ganges/Yamuna valley -- despite their early beginning -- remained at the village level throughout the Indus urban period. It was only after the decline of the Indus nuclear cities around 1750 that the contact between eastward-expanding Indus cultivators and the established rice-growing cultures of the Ganges/Yamuna region brought about a more extensive exploitation of rice cultivation as the foundation for a new regional cultural system -- a system which, under the domination of Vedic Aryans and Aryan tribal kingdoms from the late second millennium onward, resulted in India's second urbanization and the creation of the urban Gangetic Civilization after around 800 BCE [old model -- see pp. a and 19 ff. for the new model].

In the South, the catalyst for new developments was similarly the expansion of Indus settlements into the valleys of the Narmada and Tapti rivers and onto the Deccan Plateau. Indus expansion basically moved eastward from one river system to the next along two major trajectories, one to the north of the Thar Desert that forms a dry and barren wasteland on the eastern side of the central Indus valley, the other to the south of the Thar Desert along the coast of the Arabian Sea. The northern trajectory carried urban-

period settlements up the tributaries of the Indus to the Himalayan foothills, eastward along the then fully-flowing Saraswati River (represented now by the minor Ghaggar River), and across to the valley of the Yamuna River and the Doab between the Yamuna and Ganges, with a string of prosperous towns and clusters of villages along the way. The southern trajectory was less continuous in terms of settlement areas, and moved from the shifting delta region of the Indus to the Rann of Kutch (geologically part of the Indus delta system, and at times the delta of the Nara River that carried the Saraswati to the sea east of the present Indus channel), to the Saurashtra peninsula, to the valleys of the Narmada and Tapti rivers, and then southward onto the Deccan Plateau as far as the upper tributaries of the Godavari River -- an expansion marked at its furthest known point by the village of Daimabad on the Pravara River some 50 miles west of its juncture with the Godavari and about half that distance from its origin in the Western Ghats.

The two geographically separate eastward movements of Indus settlements differed dramatically in the pattern of their expansion, the conditions they encountered, and their subsequent histories. The expansion in the north was essentially an extension of established settlement and cultivation patterns into new territory that was little different from older settlement areas in the Indus valley in terms of terrain and suitability for familiar crops, at least until settlement reached the Ganges/Yamuna valley. Older pre-urban sites like Kalibangan were absorbed in this process, and substantial towns were established to serve the intensive settlement region along the

8

Saraswati prior to that river's drying up when its headwaters were captured by the Yamuna. This geologically-caused transformation of the eastern Indus tributaries seems to have been a major factor in the decline of the nuclear Indus cities by around 1750 BCE and the abandonment of villages and towns like Kalibangan on the lower Saraswati, although some settlements further upstream survived until perhaps 1400 BCE and at least one -- the late Indus settlement of Bhagwanpura -- overlapped with the so-called "Painted Grey Ware" (PGW) culture associated with the region of Aryan settlement between the eastern Indus tributaries and the central Ganges valley, the Aryavarta of the classical Vedic cultural tradition. It was this latter region that became a center of rice cultivation during the PGW period after the end of the Indus culture, and that began the new urbanization process in northern India after around 800 BCE in the context of the introduction of iron from South India and the creation of a new cultural system identified with pottery known as "Northern Black Polished Ware" (NBPW) that linked the Ganges valley, the Narmada valley, and the northwestern Deccan Plateau [again, old model].

The pattern of expansion in the south was different in almost every way. New settlement in the north moved along or between tributaries of the Indus river system until they crossed to another interconnected river system in the Ganges/Yamuna valley. Southern expansion, however, moved eastward from one river system to the next along the coast of the Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Cambay, into which flow four major rivers -- the Sabarmati and Mahi from the

north, and the Narmada and Tapti from the east -- within the space of a hundred miles. Settlements were established for cultivation in the higher regions between rivers in the Rann of Kutch and the Saurashtra Peninsula, with towns along the coast in each region and a major port city, Lothal, at the head of the Gulf of Cambay just east of the Sabarmati River, from which coastal trade was carried out as far as the Persian Gulf and perhaps even Africa.

Settlements at the mouths of the Narmada and Tapti rivers mark the furthest extension of this expansion along the coast. South of these rivers, settlers apparently avoided the heavy rainfall area of coastal Konkan west of the Western Ghats and moved instead up the rivers and southward onto the western Deccan Plateau as far as the headwaters of the Godavari River. By the end of this process, at the furthest site so far known, the village of Daimabad, the traces of Indus urban culture were still present but faint, and a new ecology had to be faced in which the wheat and barley staples of western India did not thrive.

In the next river system further south, however, in the valleys of the Bhima and Krishna rivers and the central Deccan (northern Karnataka and western Andhra Pradesh), earlier waves of pre-urban neolithic settlers and pastoralists had begun the cultivation of millet -- a grain much better suited to the summer monsoon growing season of the Deccan peninsula -- perhaps as early as the end of the third millennium. By the end of the Indus urban period, millet was being adopted by both Indus cultivators in Saurashtra and the Deccan plateau and by other village cultures on the margins of Indus

expansion, providing a new subsistence crop appropriate for the southern region that paralleled the role of rice for the Ganges/Yamuna valley. The end of Indus expansion in the south and the gradual decline of Indus urban cultural influence was thus only the end of one stage of development and the preparation for another, as new and more dynamic village cultures took over the developmental role from a declining post-urban Indus culture -- without the advantage of urban resources, but with a wider range of agricultural choices to adapt to the varied ecological conditions of central and southern India.

Nonetheless, despite the differences in geography, settlement patterns, ecology, and staple crops, the development processes in the Ganges/Yamuna valley and the regions further south were much the same up to around the middle of the second millennium BCE: expanding Indus urban culture extending eastward by way of new villages and towns into regions of earlier village cultures, the conquest or absorption of earlier cultures during the period of strong urban centers and a coherent Indus cultural system, the gradual weakening of Indus urban cultural features after ca. 1750 with the decline of the nuclear cities, and the creation of new non-Indus village cultures in the areas of furthest Indus village settlement. There is no evidence of major cultural differences in language, religion, etc., between the northern and southern extensions of Indus urban-period settlement during the initial stages of expansion, although regional variations in cultural equipment began to appear as settlements moved out of western India into new environments

and came into contact with new groups of already settled cultivators and tribal populations.

The first significant break with this common cultural pattern began in the south, where a new village tradition known as the Malwa Culture emerged around 1700 BCE and spread both north and south of the Narmada river between the upper Chambal and Betwa river valleys in the north to the upper reaches of the Bhima and Godavari rivers in the western Deccan, replacing all of the previous Indus and non-Indus village cultures in this region. The most important changes, however, were in the north, especially in the Ganges/Yamuna valley, where the combination of a shift to new patterns of cultivation (from wheat and barley to rice) and the influx of the Aryan pastoral tribes after ca. 1500 BCE gave rise to a new cultural tradition quite distinct from that of the region south of the flat alluvial plain of the Ganges/Yamuna valley -- a line of separation marked topographically by the northern extensions of the Vindhya Range and culturally by the northernmost sites of the Malwa Culture at Eran on the Betwa River and Nagda on the Chambal, both of which sites significantly were fortified in contrast to Malwa Culture villages further south.

A great deal of effort has been spent over the years on what archaeologists call "the Aryan problem": i.e., trying to connect "the Aryans" with any of the known material cultural remains that have been found in the area of later Aryan settlement and rule in the Ganges/Yamuna valley, especially in the Doab, the region between the two rivers, or more comprehensively trying to trace the path of

the Aryans into India. Very little has been achieved by these efforts except in a negative sense, nor is it likely that anything will in the light of now substantial archaeological evidence that covers the relevant time period from numerous sites throughout the entire region from northwest India to the Ganges valley -- none of which can be identified with the pastoral nomadic Aryan tribes.

What the archaeological evidence shows in the eastern Punjab and the modern state of Haryana -- the region between the upper reaches of the Sutlej and Yamuna rivers after they descend from the Himalayas, and thus the primary route from northwest India to the Doab -- is a continuous sequence of cultures from the earliest pre-urban village culture in the region (called Siswal A, from the type-site village of Siswal in western Haryana, dated ca. 2100 BCE) through a cultural level with mature Indus urban artifacts (Siswal B) to a post-urban cultural level (Siswal C) and a subsequent level (Siswal D) similar to Siswal C but with associated Painted Grey Ware pottery. This final stage of the Siswal sequence can be dated ca. 1100 BCE, following which there is a cultural level in which Painted Grey Ware (PGW) predominates, not only at sites in the eastern Punjab and Haryana but throughout the upper Ganges/Yamuna valley. The PGW culture continued for the next seven centuries, until ca. 400 BCE, by which time it was being absorbed in and superseded by an Iron Age culture identified by Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) that began ca. 700 BCE and lasted until ca. 100 BCE -- i.e., from early in the period of Gangetic urbanization until after the end of the Mauryan Dynasty. All of these cultures

except the last remained within the alluvial plain of North India, and with the same exception none extended further east than the conjunction of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers at the eastern end of the Doab. Only with the NBPW culture of the urbanizing North Indian Iron Age were the region of Magadha in the east and the western Deccan Plateau in the south drawn into the same cultural system as the western Ganges/Yamuna region that was marked in the preceding period by the PGW culture.

It is clear from this archaeological evidence that the PGW culture is the one most likely to be connected with the Aryans, beginning as it did in the late second millennium in a region associated with Aryan settlement and coextensive in its known locations with the region of the North Indian plain from the eastern Punjab to the eastern Doab that became known as Aryavarta, the "land of the Aryans." It is equally clear, however, that the Painted Grey Ware that marks this culture was not brought in by the Aryans, because it exists in an interlocking sequence of related cultures that can be traced back in the eastern Punjab not only to the introduction of Indus urban culture in the region but to the local pre-Indus village culture known as Siswal A that has affinities with other pre-urban village cultures further west. While it thus seems almost certain that the PGW culture is related to Aryan settlement in the region of its appearance because of the close fit in time and space, the culture itself and its typical pottery were not the product of the Aryans alone but of Aryan interaction with existing cultures within a region integrated by Aryan settlement and Aryan military

and social dominance. The Aryans did not replace earlier village cultures whose roots went back to the Indus urban period or before; they dominated them as a self-defined elite people who controlled the people of the land politically and economically -- and influenced them linguistically and culturally -- within their zone of domination.

But if the PGW culture defines the region of Aryan control and primary influence, it also marks its limits. Judging from the evidence of Painted Grey Ware distribution, that presumed Aryan region did not extend eastward beyond the Ganges/Yamuna Doab and thus did not encompass either Benares/Varanasi and the related kingdom of Kasi just to the east of the Ganges/Yamuna confluence or the region of Magadha even further to the east beyond the Son River south of the Ganges. Kosala to the northeast of the Doab was also outside the PGW cultural region, although there is evidence of some PGW contact at the capital city of Sravasti, and the kingdom of the Mallas to its east, the Vrijian confederacy at Vaisali north of the Ganges from Magadha, and the Videhan kingdom further to the north near Nepal were even more removed from the center of Aryan control. There was no doubt some Aryan or Vedic influence in these areas, most likely from wandering ascetics and teachers or itinerant priests, but it is significant that all of these Gangetic regions so important in the early history of the Buddhist and Jain movements were outside the area of dominant Aryan culture and institutions as defined by the boundaries of the PGW culture. All of these areas were within the more inclusive Northern Black Polished Ware region

after the beginning of the Iron Age in North India in the seventh century BCE, but by then the balance of political power was also shifting in their direction with the emergence of Kosala and Magadha as powerful states on the northern and southern flanks of the Ganges and the eventual domination of all of North India by the Magadha-based Mauryan Empire. It was only at this point, after more than a thousand years of separate development, that the Gangetic region was brought into significant interaction with the cultures that had emerged during that period south of the riverine plain of North India.

The distinction between the northern alluvial plain and the region to its south is a major factor in Indian history. Geologically, India is the product of ancient (and continuing) geological forces that pushed the formerly separate Indian tectonic plate into the southern edge of Asia. The impact of this collision forced the southern edge of the Asia land mass up to form the Himalayas (where marine sediments can be found at the highest altitudes), and raised up the region on the edges of this primary line of impact to form the Hindu Kush and Baluchistan hills on the west and the mountains of Burma on the east. As these regions were raised, the Indian tectonic plate was forced downward, forming a depression on the Indian side of the impact zone that was filled with sediments brought down from the uplifted Asian highlands. These sedimentary deposits form the alluvial plain of western India (the Indus River system), the North Indian alluvial plain (the Ganges/Yamuna system) and the lowlands of Bengal and Bangladesh (the Ganges/Brahmaputra system) -- a crescent of alluvial deposits within which there is no

more than a thousand feet difference in altitude between sea level and the highest point of the watershed between the Indus and Yamuna rivers south of the Himalayas.

Within the inner curve of this crescent, the land goes up in a series of foothills to the Aravalli Range in southern Rajasthan, the Vindhya Range in central Madhya Pradesh, and a cluster of mountain ranges in southern Bihar, eastern Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa. Between the Aravalli and Vindhya mountains lies the Malwa Plateau, from which a series of rivers flow northward into the Yamuna River: the Chambal in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, with its western tributary, the Banas, in Rajasthan and its eastern tributaries, the Kali Sindh and Parbati, in northern Madhya Pradesh; the Sind and the Betwa, with its tributary the Dhasan, in northern Madhya Pradesh; and the Ken, which marks the eastern edge of the Malwa region in northern Madhya Pradesh.

South of the Vindhya Range are two major river systems that have their origin in western Madhya Pradesh: the Narmada, which flows westward into the Gulf of Cambay, and the Son, which flows north and east into the Ganges just upstream from the ancient Mauryan capital at Pataliputra (modern Patna); at their point of origin, the Narmada and Son begin almost side by side in the Maikala Range in western Madhya Pradesh. South of the Narmada is the Satpura Range, which parallels the Narmada on the south as the Vindhya Range does on the north; and south of the Satpura Range is the Tapti River, which flows westward like the Narmada into the Gulf of Cambay along the southern boundary of Madhya Pradesh.

South of the Tapti River is the beginning of the Deccan Plateau, a tableland tilted eastward from the Western Ghats near the coast of the Arabian Sea (the northern Konkan and southern Malabar Coast) toward the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal. All of the major river systems on the Deccan Plateau thus flow from west to east from their origins in the Western Ghats: the Godavari and its tributaries in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh in the northern Deccan; the Bhima and the Krishna in southern Maharashtra and northern Karnataka, which join in eastern Karnataka and flow eastward as the Krishna across central Andhra Pradesh; and the Cauvery in southern Karnataka, which flows eastward across central Tamil Nadu to a broad delta region on the southern Coromandel Coast below Pondicherry.

As this geographical survey indicates, the region east of the Indus and south of the Ganges/Yamuna valley is very different from the western and northern alluvial plains. On the most obvious level, it is divided by numerous mountain systems and hilly regions that separate its intricate web of river systems from each other. In the Malwa Plateau north of the Vindhya Range, these river systems flow north into the Yamuna; east of the Malwa region, the Son flows north and east into the Ganges; between the Vindhya Range and the Deccan Plateau, the Narmada and Tapti flow westward into the Gulf of Cambay; on the Deccan Plateau, the rivers flow eastward to the Bay of Bengal. There is thus nothing like the extensive alluvial plains that formed a corridor for expansion in the Indus valley and even more so in the Ganges/Yamuna valley -- expansion first of

settlement and cultivation, and later of trade and political control. South of the alluvial plains, geography almost demands local and regional development within limited zones of terrain, soil, and climate. Rainfall is relatively low in some regions of the western Deccan in the monsoon shadow of the Western Ghats, and many regions of heavier rainfall are also mountainous and heavily forested -- more suited, no doubt then as now, for tribal hunting and gathering or transient cultivation than for settled village agriculture.

It is obvious that no single subsistence strategy would work throughout this varied region, nor could cultivators rely on the same crops everywhere. Pastoralism of the sort found at Utnur and other sites in the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys of the central Deccan as early as the mid-third millennium was ideally suited to the dry conditions of the Deccan plains and no doubt remained -- as it does today -- an important complement to the cultivation that emerged soon after in that region. Wheat, the West Asian and western Indian staple, did not grow well in the Deccan, so early cultivators along the Bhima and Godavari tributaries in western Maharashtra (Inamgaon, Daimabad, etc.) added the more suitable sorghum (jowar) and millet (ragi) to their repertoire alongside barley by probably the late third millennium. Both wheat and barley were grown in the Narmada valley at Navdatoli and further north in Malwa in the early second millennium, and rice was added to the available grains by the middle of the second millennium at Navdatoli on the Narmada and in Malwa and the Banas River culture (Ahar). Hunting and fishing of

course remained an available supplement to the food supply of both pastoralists and cultivators, and in the more mountainous regions hunting was probably the most reliable source of food along with forest gathering even after cultivation became available.

By around 1700 BCE, as the Indus urban culture was waning, the accumulation of subsistence strategies in various village cultures south of the Ganges/Yamuna valley coalesced into what is called the Malwa Culture, which spread not only throughout the region of Malwa north of the Vindhya Range but also south across the Narmada as far as the northern Deccan -- a cultural region some 400 miles from north to south that linked the upper Chambal and Betwa valleys, the central valleys of the Narmada and Tapti, and the tributaries of the Godavari and Bhima. No specific point of origin of this culture has so far been identified, although the earliest known radiocarbon dates are from Kayatha on the Kali Sindh, a tributary of the Chambal, where an even earlier Chalcolithic village culture has been found that coexisted with the Indus urban culture in the early second millennium in much the same way as the Banas River culture to its northwest in Rajasthan and the early village cultures in the Deccan.

Wherever it began, the Malwa Culture spread between 1700 and 1500 BCE throughout Malwa and the northwest Deccan with a common cultural system adapted to local conditions. The two northernmost sites, Nagda on the Chambal and Eran on a branch of the Betwa, both were fortified -- Nagda with a mud brick wall and Eran with a moat and a mud rampart some 50 yards thick at the base,

which points to both emerging political power and a situation of some insecurity on the main access routes from the Yamuna valley. Navdatoli, however, a strategically located site on the south bank of the Narmada in its broad central valley, was not fortified, nor were any sites further south on the Tapti, Godavari, or Bhima. The pattern at these sites was an integration of earlier village cultures into the predominant Malwa system as at Navdatoli and Daimabad, the establishment of new intermediate sites as at Prakash on the Tapti River, and the extension of the culture further south as at Inamgaon on a tributary of the Bhima. There is no evidence of conquest at any of the Malwa Culture sites, but rather a gradual amalgamation of existing resources and subsistence strategies into an integrated cultural system.

The identifying feature of this system was its distinctive Malwa Ware, a buff or orange slipped pottery painted in black or dark brown with a wide variety of geometric designs and lively animal and human figures: deer, antelope, bulls, cranes, peacocks, dogs, pigs, panthers, tortoises, crocodiles, lizards, and insects, with both male and female human figures in what seem to be ritual poses or scenes. One jar has appliqué figurines of a female worshipper and a lizard flanking a shrine, another has a shrine with a tortoise, and tortoise amulets were apparently also worn. Terracotta female figurines and terracotta bulls appear at various of the sites. Burials at most sites were in urns, often beneath the houses, as were almost all children's burials, although some sites in the Deccan had extended burials; in one case, at Daimabad, a skeleton damaged

below the knees appears to have been lying in state under a canopy supported by fourteen poles. Dwellings at most of the sites were simple wattle and daub huts, although mud bricks were used for houses as well as for the fortification wall at Nagda and some of the structures at Inamgaon in the south were pit-dwellings with floors sunk two to four feet below the ground level -- one of which had a twin urn buried beneath the floor.

There are no radiocarbon dates for sites in Malwa proper to fix the end point of the Malwa Culture north of the Narmada, although it seems to have survived there into the first millennium BCE. By around 1400 BCE, however, a new cultural system known as the Jorwe Culture was spreading throughout the western Deccan and replacing the Malwa Culture as far north as Navdatoli on the Narmada and as far south as Inamgaon on the Ghod tributary of the Bhima, with contacts even further south into the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys settled earlier by Neolithic pastoralists and cultivators. The type-site, Jorwe, is only a few miles west on the Pravara tributary of the Godavari from the important Indus-Malwa site of Daimabad; about 50 miles west of Nevasa (a Pravara-valley site that dates back to Palaeolithic times as a center of lithic tool-making); and about 50 miles north of the Malwa Culture site of Inamgaon and nearby Chandoli (another Palaeolithic tool-making site) on the Ghod. This cluster of sites between the Godavari and Bhima seem to be the original nucleus of the Jorwe Culture, which then spread north to Nasik on the upper Godavari, Bahal on the southern Girna tributary of the Tapti, Prakash on the Tapti, and

Navdatoli on the Narmada -- a line of sites striking in its almost exact conformity to the southern portion of the modern National Highway route between Bombay on the coast southwest of Nasik and Mathura on the Yamuna just above its confluence with the Chambal.

The identifying feature of the Jorwe Culture is its thin-walled hard-fired pottery with an orange or red matt surface painted with designs in black, distinctively different from Malwa Ware both in its forms (especially its wide-mouthed spouted jars) and in the predominance of painted geometric designs instead of the exuberant Malwa painted animals and human figures. Theriomorphic pots appear, however, one from Chandoli in the shape of a bull with diagonal dashed lines painted the length of its body, and terracotta female figurines were found at various sites. A large five-roomed house near the center of the town at Inamgaon had an oval clay receptacle buried in a hole in the floor with a female figurine inside and, on top of it, a bull figurine and a pedestaled female torso with stippled pock-marks on its chest and neck and a rounded cone in place of its head. This same house also contained the skeleton of a man with his ankles and feet intact, a departure from the usual practice of severing the feet below the ankles in extended burials.

Concern for the dead was clearly an important part of the Jorwe Culture. Children were buried in coarse red/grey pottery urns placed horizontally mouth-to-mouth and adults were buried in an extended position, both in grave-pits dug within the house in a north-south alignment with heads facing north, usually with grave goods such as Jorwe Ware bowls and spouted jars and sometimes

jewelry; a burial at Nevasa on the Pravara had with it a necklace of copper beads on a silk thread -- one of the earliest known instances in India of silk, which later became important in the Deccan textile tradition and is today a state monopoly in Karnataka. At Inamgaon, the skeletal remains of a forty-year-old man in a seated position were found in a unique four-legged unbaked urn, one of whose sides was modeled like a female abdomen, and the accompanying spouted Jorwe jar had a boat painted on it; another burial in a large house at the same site also had a four-legged urn with funerary jars and a bowl but no skeletal remains.

Most of the Jorwe sites were small, consisting of only a few wattle and daub huts, with regional nuclear towns at Prakash on the Tapti, Daimabad on the Pravara tributary of the Godavari, and Inamgaon on the Ghod tributary of the Bhima. Despite its relatively small scale, however, the Jorwe Culture represented an advance over the Malwa Culture in many respects and served to integrate the developments of that earlier culture in the region with those of the Neolithic cultures further south in the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys. Inamgaon, which has been the most thoroughly excavated of the Jorwe sites, had something of a regular town plan with a well-defined street, large houses -- one some 30 x 80 feet with five rooms -- at the center, and a craftsmen's area on the western edge of town in the pattern still followed in the region. Identified crafts at this site included potters, ivory carvers, goldsmiths, and lime maker (for whitewashing floors and storage pits). A technologically advanced pottery kiln, a copper-smelting kiln, and a crucible and

tongs for goldsmithing were found in the craftsmen's area, clear evidence of a local source for the hand-fired Jorwe pottery and the copper bangles and gold ornaments found at the site. Ornamental beads of agate, carnelian, jasper and chalcedony, gold, copper, and ivory have been found at various Jorwe sites, most of them likely also of regional origin.

By Jorwe times, vegetable food sources in this region included barley, millet, peas, berries, lentils, and rice along with several varieties of fruit. Domesticated animals included cattle and goats, pigs, horses, dogs, and elephants, and camel bones have also been identified. Wild animals hunted for food included black buck, wild buffalo, antelope (nilgai), and deer (chital, sambhar, and barasingha), probably roasted over the large pits found at the sites. It is evident that this was not a marginal economy in terms of food supply, but one that by the end of the second millennium BCE had amalgamated a full range of regionally suited subsistence strategies.

Not all of the sites in the Jorwe cultural region had the same history of development. Daimabad, for example, has an occupation history that spans the full range from pre-Indus Neolithic through late Indus and Malwa Chalcolithic to the Jorwe Culture. Inamgaon may have had Neolithic influences from the South, but was beyond the furthest reach of the Indus culture and became important in the Malwa and Jorwe periods. Navdatoli on the Narmada by contrast may have been influenced early by the Banas River culture from Rajasthan before it was drawn into the Malwa culture system, and remained on the margin of Jorwe influence. Prakash on the Tapti

was apparently founded during the Malwa period and became an important Jorwe site, while Jorwe itself was apparently a product of the period to which it gave its name. Two sites midway between Daimabad and Inamgaon, Theur and Sastevadi, maintained a southern Neolithic tradition into the Malwa and Jorwe periods with their own pottery type in addition to Malwa and Jorwe Ware and with circular houses surrounded by concentric circles of stone boulders that have been found nowhere else in the region. South of Inamgaon, earlier Neolithic sites in the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys such as Hallur, Maski, Piklihal, and Brahmagiri apparently had some contact with the Malwa and Jorwe cultures to their north but remained outside their primary cultural sphere, reemerging into significance only with the Megalithic Iron Age culture for which the earliest known radiocarbon dates -- around 1100 BCE at Hallur -- are in the immediate region of the Krishna/Tungabhadra valleys.

What this survey reveals is not a uniformity of development in the regions south of the Ganges/Yamuna plain, but a slow evolution of a number of different cultures that crystallized out into distinctive regional cultural systems between the end of the Indus urban culture and the beginning of the Iron Age around the end of the second millennium BCE in South India. Chronologically, this process began with the spread of pastoral and cultivator communities and/or tribes before the rise of Indus urban culture, and it was well advanced by the end of that culture and the entry of Aryan tribes into northwest India. By the beginning of the Painted Grey Ware culture in the eastern Punjab and the Ganges/Yamuna Doab, which

marks the point at which Aryan settlement had stimulated a new Aryan-cultivator synthesis that defined the territory of Aryavarta, the regions south of the Ganges/Yamuna plain as far as the central Deccan had experienced more than half a millennium of separate cultural integration with the expansion of first the Malwa Culture throughout the entire region and then the Jorwe Culture south of the Narmada. Slow as the southern process may have been, it thus was at least as far advanced by the end of the second millennium as the process in the Ganges/Yamuna valley and formed a cultural region no less coherent than Aryavarta.

Neither the Malwa Culture nor the Jorwe Culture reveal any evidence of Aryan influence. Whatever similarities they may have with cultures outside their own region were not with the immigrant Aryan tribes but with the earlier cultivator traditions of western India, the Indus Civilization, and -- more remotely -- the cultures of Iran. Mainly, however, they seem to be the products of the people and conditions of their own region, an area that can be roughly defined by a boundary drawn through the modern cities of Ajmer in central Rajasthan, Bombay in western Maharashtra, Mangalore and Bangalore in southern Karnataka, Nagpur in eastern Maharashtra, and Benares/Varanasi in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Before the beginning of the Malwa Culture around 1700 BCE, the copper-rich northwest part of this area east of the Aravalli Range was occupied by the Banas River Culture, the northeast in the Belan River region between the Tons and Son rivers by early rice cultivators, the south in the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys by early pastoralists and Neolithic

cultivators, and the western central region from the Gulf of Cambay and the Narmada River southward to Daimabad (about 100 miles northwest of Bombay on the Deccan Plateau) by the southern extension of Indus village settlements. By 1000 BCE, the resources of all of these separate regions had been integrated into the Malwa Culture and expanded in the region south of the Narmada by the Jorwe Culture, which together encompassed all of the larger area except for the northeast corner and the far south.

The long-term consequences of this achievement can be seen from the later history of regions within or on the margins of this cultural system. The Banas River site of Ahar, for example, is about 75 miles east of the later Jain center at Mt. Abu (Arbuda) in the Aravalli Range and 150 miles south of the Hindu pilgrimage center at Pushkar, both sites on the Mahabharata's pilgrimage list (Bhardwaj, Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India, pp. 45-47); the fortified Malwa town of Nagda is about 25 miles from Ujjain, one of the seven Hindu sacred cities and another Mahabharata pilgrimage site, which was successively the capital of the Avanti kingdom at the time of the Buddha, the capital of the Sakas, and a capital of the Gupta empire; Navdatoli is just across the Narmada from Maheshwar and just downstream from the sacred Hindu island in the Narmada known as Omkara Mandhata, one or the other of which is the site of ancient Mahismati or Mahisamandala, one of the most important pilgrimage sites on the Narmada according to various puranas; the Narmada itself is said by the Matsya and Padma Puranas to be holy throughout its length, and the Vayu Purana calls it the daughter of the pitrs

("fathers" or ancestors) and claims that Sraddhas offered anywhere along its length become inexhaustible; the other fortified Malwa town (along with Nagda), Eran, was a tributary city under the Sakas during its rule by pre-Gupta Naga kings, was the site of a colossal (13-1/2 foot) image of Visnu and a life-sized image of Visnu as the Boar erected by late Gupta rulers and of a Garuda column erected by local rulers near the end of Gupta control in 485 CE, and was the site also of a massive (11-1/2 ft. high x 10-1/2 ft. long) theriomorphic image of Visnu as the Boar erected ca. 490 near the beginning of the reign of the Huna "King of Kings" (Maharajadhiraja) Toramana in the Malwa region.

Is Eran
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as
Vijaygiri?
Seems
heavily
anyway.
See below.

Vidisa, some 40 miles southeast of Eran, although not identified as a Malwa Culture site, was clearly part of the same cultural region and was an important city along with Ujjain and Mahismati in the Avanti kingdom at the time of the Buddha, was the headquarters for Asoka when he ruled Avanti as viceroy in behalf of his father Bindusara before he was posted to Taxila in Gandhara, and was the viceregal center also for Agnimitra Sunga, son of the Mauryan general Pushyamitra Sunga who usurped the throne and ended Mauryan rule ca. 187 BCE; it was here at Vidisa (known also as Besnagar) that Heliodoros, ambassador to the Sunga prince's court from the Indo-Greek ruler Antialkidas at Taxila, erected a Garuda column in honor of Vasudeva, "the god of gods" -- whether before or after Agnimitra succeeded his father on the throne in 151 BCE is not clear, but it must at least have been after his own son had stopped further Greek advances into North India. After the collapse of the

Besnagar
is the "old"
Vidisa
site?

Sunga dynasty ca. 40-30 BCE, Vidisa came successively under the rule of the southern Satavahana dynasty, the Sakas, the Kushans, and the Nagas before Samudra Gupta (ca. 340/50-380 CE) added it to the expanding Gupta territory, and it was an important staging point for the successful campaigns by Chandra Gupta II (380-413 CE) against the Sakas in Gujarat and further west to complete the Gupta conquest of northern India above the Narmada; it was apparently just after the end of these campaigns ca. 400 CE that the first major Gupta Hindu reliefs and cave temples were carved at the hill site of Udayagiri across the river from Vidisa and the earliest extant Gupta stone temple was built at the earlier Buddhist site of Sañci some three miles south of Udayagiri/Vidisa. It is hard to miss the symbolism of this latter act, paralleling as it does Asoka's building of a stupa near the city where he had formerly served as viceroy and his placing of a pillar edict at the site.

N. F. Smith
quote what
T. is getting
at here.

Eastern Malwa, the region of Eran and Vidisa and the Betwa valley, marks the eastern limit of known Malwa Culture sites. East of this region, beyond the valley of the Ken River, another developmental process was at work that drew on the resources of the Ganges valley from the eastern Doab to the area around the ancient Mauryan capital of Pataliputra (modern-day Patna) where within the space of about 150 miles the Ganges is joined by the Ghaghara and Gandak rivers from the north and the Son and Phalgu rivers from the south -- the Son from its sources close to the origin of the Narmada, the Phalgu from its sources in the highlands south of Gaya, through which it flows on its course northward to the

Ganges. The earliest known cultivation of rice in South Asia was within this region as early as 5000 BCE at villages in the Belan valley just south of the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna at modern-day Allahabad, and it was no doubt from such sources that rice spread westward into the Malwa and Deccan regions. But while the Belan valley can be included in the Malwa/Deccan area defined earlier in terms of this contribution, its primary connections from at least the early second millennium onward were with the emerging cultural system of the eastern Ganges valley -- a system that also was, like the Malwa/Deccan system, outside the area of the later Painted Grey Ware Culture in the Ganges/Yamuna Doab.

The earliest known type-sites of this eastern Gangetic culture are at Chirand and Chechar, the former at the juncture of the Ghaghara and Ganges 30 miles west of Patna and the latter at the juncture of the Gandak and Ganges 15 miles east of Patna, both on the north side of the Ganges across the river from the juncture of the Son about 20 miles west of Patna -- a location ideally suited for wide-ranging contacts, since the Ghaghara and Gandak come down from the Himalayas from northwest of Patna in a wide fan of tributaries that stretch for hundreds of miles across the plain north of the Doab, while the westernmost source of the Son southwest of Patna is only 150 miles from Eran and Vidisha in eastern Malwa. In the early stages, this location no doubt brought influences into the eastern Gangetic region from all directions; later on, after the region was urbanized, it gave first the kingdom of Magadha and later the Mauryans and Guptas a superb staging point for their campaigns

of conquest along both the northern and southern flanks of the Ganges/Yamuna region.

The villages of Chirand and Chechar were both advanced Neolithic sites at their founding around 1800 BCE, with a variety of pottery styles, a full kit of stone and bone tools for hunting, fishing, and domestic tasks, and an established agriculture. Early dwellings were apparently pit-dwellings reminiscent of those in the early stage of Inamgaon in the Deccan, while later dwellings were aboveground wattle-and-daub huts. A number of terracotta objects were found at the sites, including beads, bangles, bull and bird figurines, numerous serpent figurines, and a realistic terracotta phallus. The most interesting feature of these Neolithic sites, however, is their repertoire of cultivated plants which included, in addition to rice, both wheat and barley, lentil (*lens esculenta*), green gram (*phaseolus aureus*), and peas -- a combination that almost exactly replicates plants found at the Malwa Culture sites of Navdatoli and Inamgaon, and that is even more striking in light of the great differences in the climate, conditions, and native plants of the eastern Ganges from those of the region between West Asia and the Deccan Plateau where the Malwa cultivation repertoire was developed. Wheat and barley especially could not have been domesticated in the eastern Ganges region, but must have been brought there from a region where they were more suitable. In related Neolithic culture sites further down the Ganges in Bengal, in fact, at Rajar Dhibi and Mahisdal, only rice is found as a staple crop and the Malwa-type combination disappears.

This evidence from the eastern Ganges strongly suggests that the early settlers at Chirand and Chechar were immigrants from Malwa, probably from the early stages of settlement in the Malwa/Narmada region before or during the Indus urban period, and that they moved eastward along the Narmada and Son valleys to the Son/Ganges confluence instead of going south into the Deccan. Once they reached the Ganges, they had access to native rice cultivation and to other resources from the mineral-rich region in the highlands southeast of Patna, and could follow their own process of development. In the case of Chirand and Chechar, this process led to an evolution from Neolithic to Chalcolithic culture by the middle of the second millennium and the advent of iron around 700 BCE. Since the related sites in Bengal provide clear evidence of local iron smelting, this transition to the Iron Age must have been based largely on locally developed exploitation of regional mineral resources rather than on imported practices, although influence from the iron-using megalithic peoples to the south cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor.

The obvious significance of this evidence from the eastern Ganges region around Patna is that it places an advanced Neolithic culture east of the Ganges/Yamuna Doab before the Aryans entered India, and at least circumstantially links this culture with those of Malwa and the Deccan. This culture had reached the Chalcolithic stage by the time the Aryans came into northwest India, some five centuries before the beginning of the Painted Grey Ware culture in the western Doab, and entered the Iron Age at least as early as any

There is
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early iron dates
they seem
contradictory

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known sites in the Doab -- i.e., by around 700 BCE. Iron artifacts appear at PGW sites in the Doab by around that time, but represent a relatively sparse presence of iron that must have been brought in from Rajasthan (Noh and Bairat in eastern Rajasthan, and Jodhpur in west central Rajasthan, are known iron sources during the PGW period) because there is no local iron in the alluvial Doab plain, whereas the highlands south and east of the Patna region have rich iron deposits that were exploited early and independent of the PGW culture.

The traditional model of cultural development in North India centers on Aryan settlement in the Doab, the eastward expansion of the resulting Aryan-dominated culture (which we can now identify with some certainty as the Painted Grey Ware culture), and the related extension of urbanization eastward to the region of Magadha as a foundation for this latter region's emergence to political power around the time of the Buddha. It is now clear that this model needs substantial revision. We need not doubt the eastward expansion of the Aryans into the Doab, but the boundary of the PGW culture area indicates that this expansion did not go beyond the Doab and in fact did not include the heavily forested easternmost tip of the Doab where the Ganges and Yamuna converge. West of this point, and between the Doab and the Himalayas west of about 81° longitude, the Aryan-related PGW culture prevails; east of this line of demarcation, however, cultural development both north and south of the Ganges was based on the pre-Aryan eastern Gangetic culture found at the early sites of Chirand and Chechar in the Patna region

No.
Critique of
Aryan
expansion
model

and at later urban sites east of 81° longitude where the Chalcolithic eastern Gangetic culture merges into an Iron Age culture with only slight and sporadic evidence of Painted Grey Ware contact -- and no local PGW culture -- in the process of transition.

The corrected model is therefore not one of an eastern extension of Iron Age culture and urbanization into the eastern Gangetic region, but rather a model of two cultural processes moving more or less concurrently toward the use of iron and urbanization from two separate sources: one in the eastern Punjab, Rajasthan, the Doab, and northward to the Himalayas west of 81° longitude, identified with the Painted Grey Ware culture and the Aryans; the other -- based on the eastern Gangetic culture with its apparent initial connection to the Malwa-type cultural complex -- in the region of Patna, in the valleys of the Ghaghara and Gandak rivers northwest of Patna, and westward to the region around the lower Doab.

The strongest evidence for this revised model comes from two sites that flank the lower Doab on the immediate north and south: Sringaverapura, north of the Ganges some 22 miles northwest of the Yamuna-Ganges junction and present-day Allahabad, and Kausambi, 35 miles southwest of Allahabad on the south bank of the Yamuna. Both sites date back into the time period of Painted Grey Ware; Kausambi is literally just across the Yamuna from the lower Doab; and Sringaverapura is within a few miles of the northern bank of the Ganges. If the Painted Grey Ware culture had extended eastward to the Ganges/Yamuna confluence and beyond, as the traditional model

assumes, then certainly no two sites were better located to show evidence of this. What the two sites show, however, is just the opposite. Srīngaverapura, the more thoroughly excavated of the two, was founded as a small village around 1050 BCE and until 700 BCE reflects the pottery and other features of the Chalcolithic culture found at Chirand and similar eastern Gangetic sites except for a few shards of Painted Grey Ware from near the end of this period; after 700 BCE until the end of the Mauryan period the culture is characterized by the predominance of Northern Black Polished Ware and the presence of iron objects, terracotta female figurines, and (after ca. 500 BCE) punch-marked coins of silver and copper. Kausambi was apparently founded somewhat later as an eastern Gangetic culture site but was a massively fortified city before the introduction of the iron-using Northern Black Polished Ware culture, and it too reflects no more than marginal contact with the Painted Grey Ware culture of the Doab further to its west prior to its entry into the NBP Iron-Age culture. These two sites at the gateway of the lower Doab, from all the available archaeological evidence, thus seem clearly to have received their cultural influences not from the presumably Aryan-dominated culture to their west but from the very different cultural system of the eastern Ganges outside the Painted Grey Ware cultural region.

Imp-
note
Locations

Equally striking is evidence from two urban sites almost due north of the eastern Doab, Ayodhya on the Ghaghara/Sarayu River and Sravasti on the northern Rapti tributary of the Ghaghara, both important cities in the region known at the time of the Buddha as

Kosala -- a region roughly defined by the Ganges on the south, 81° longitude on the west, Nepal on the north, and the Gandak River on the east, which by the Buddha's time included also the region of Kasi (Benares/Varanasi) conquered by Kosala some time earlier.

Archaeological studies of Ayodhya and Sravasti have shown that these two sites, like Sringaverapura and Kausambi to their south, were outside the Painted Grey Ware region and had only marginal contact with PGW culture before their inclusion in the iron-using Northern Black Polished Ware culture around 700/600 BCE. This evidence has special significance for these sites because Sravasti was the northern capital of Kosala and Ayodhya is famous as the birthplace of Rama, hero of the Ramayana, most of whose exploits take place either in the kingdom of Kosala which he eventually ruled or in the regions east and south of the lower Doab during his years of exile -- which began with his crossing the Ganges near Sringaverapura, according to the story.

but note
that
Saketa
may not
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Ayodhya
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Rama's connection with the eastern Gangetic cultural region is further indicated by the fact that his wife Sita, whose name means "furrow," is considered in the Ramayana to be the human/divine daughter of King Janaka of Videha and the Goddess Earth. The marriage of Rama and Sita took place in Janaka's capital of Mithila in Videha, just across the modern border of Nepal about 160 miles east of the Buddha's childhood home of Kapilavastu in the Sakya kingdom, and the wedding was performed outdoors in a plowed field on "a wide altar of Earth" (honoring Sita's mother) by King Janaka himself, who had long since gotten rid of all "pretentious brahmana

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Mithila?

priests" in Videha (he cursed them for claiming to know all the answers, their heads fell off, and their bones were stolen by thieves). All of this certainly reflects a cultural climate outside the Aryan/Brahmanical world of the Vedic texts, of which the Ramayana seems to have little more than very general knowledge, but fits very well what we know of the eastern Gangetic culture both before and after the rise of Buddhism.

is this a ref
to Upanishads? 37
I don't think
it's a ref
to Ramayana.
- it seems it is
see p 41

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The Ramayana, of course, is a work of literature and not history. Its story is set in the Treta Yuga, which ends with the coronation of Rama, and thus is said to be long before the Mahabharata war that comes at the end of the following Dvapara Yuga and ushers in the present Kali Yuga. The story itself, moreover, the Ramayana as a work of literature, has defied efforts to date either its various narrative contents or its final composition; some of its folk-tale and mythic elements may go back to at least 500 BCE or earlier, while the finished work ascribed to the poet-sage Valmiki has usually been dated by Western scholars between 200 BCE and 200 CE. Without entering into the controversial questions surrounding the dating of the text as a whole, however, one can say with confidence that not only the geographical setting of the story but also the cultural flavor of the contents are very different from those of the Mahabharata, whose story is set in the context of a conflict for succession within a family of Aryan warrior-kings in the western Doab and which is -- at least in its final form -- a massive encyclopaedia of Brahmanical teachings. The flavor of the Mahabharata, one might say, is that of a prototypical -- indeed, the

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prototypical -- Brahmanical/Hindu scripture; the flavor of the Ramayana, on the other hand, is much closer to that of the early Buddhist movement, which is not surprising if one thinks of the contents of the story as the product of the same eastern Gangetic region in which the Buddha and his early followers lived.

Supporting this claim in any detail would require a major research effort in itself; for present purposes, only a few suggestive points can be made. The characteristic features of the eastern Gangetic culture from its earliest known sites in the Patna region ca. 1800 BCE are its rootedness in agriculture and its emphasis -- in common with the apparently related Malwa and Deccan cultures -- on female powers of the earth and nature as evidenced by female figurines. The latter feature remains prominent in the Iron Age Northern Black Polished Ware culture that emerged around 600 BCE, apparently in the eastern Gangetic region, as part of the same cultural process that gave rise to the kingdom of Magadha; the presence of numerous terracotta female figurines is in fact one of the distinguishing features of the NBPW culture in addition to its distinctive pottery, and these figurines in turn provide the background for the sculptured nature-goddess figures (yaksis) that appear in the context of Buddhist stupas in the post-Mauryan period at Bharhut, Sanchi, etc. These female figurines have little basis in Buddhist teachings as such, it should be noted, but belong rather to the cultural tradition within which Buddhism emerged and spread -- a cultural tradition that seems more or less similar from the eastern Gangetic region through all of the region south of the

female
figurines

and
yaksis
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Ganges/Yamuna Doab outside the Painted Grey Ware area and on into Malwa, the Narmada valley, and the Northern Deccan -- a path of cultural continuity or at least compatibility that can be traced by early Buddhist sites at Sarnath near Benares/Varanasi, Bharhut south of Kausambi, Sanchi near Vidisa in eastern Malwa, Budhani in the central Narmada valley, Ajanta, Ellora, and Nasik in northern Maharashtra, Kanheri near present-day Bombay, and Bhaja and Karle on the Deccan plateau southeast of Bombay. Granted that all of these sites of monasteries, stupas, and/or rock-cut caves were on trade routes opened up or reinforced initially by Mauryan political conquests and sustained by the growth of urban trade afterwards; but they also depended on local support, and it is evident that that support was more forthcoming during the early Buddhist centuries in the cultural region east and south of the Doab than it was in the region of Aryan/Brahmanical dominance marked in the pre-Mauryan period by the Painted Grey Ware culture.

The strongest support for Buddhism, of course, was in the region where it originated: the eastern Gangetic region. This is not just the cultural homeland of the Buddha and the early Buddhist movement, however; it is also the cultural region to which Rama (or at least the Ramayana) belongs, and is the homeland as well of both Mahavira and the early Jain movement and of the ascetic Ajivakas. If these were all products of the same cultural setting, is there then something that they have in common that reflects the special quality of that culture? The commonalities of the Buddhist, Jain, and Ajivaka movements are obvious in that all three -- despite their

disagreements with each other in matters of doctrine and practice -- emphasize renunciation. But what does Rama have in common with them?

If we look at Rama in this context, it is obvious what he does not have in common: he is not only married in what is portrayed as an ideal romantic relationship, but his wife Sita is the daughter of the Goddess Earth. In this respect he certainly fits a cultural setting that emphasizes goddesses and the life-giving female powers of the earth, but does not seem to fit the company of monks and ascetics. We might add his father-in-law Janaka of Videha on Rama's side of this comparison as well, because he is portrayed as married to the Goddess Earth herself. Rama and Janaka thus seem from this perspective to be the prototypes of kings who marry goddesses and whose kingdoms prosper as a result.

If we look at Rama and Janaka from another perspective, however, they can be seen also as prototypes of another sort: kings who are -- if not quite monks or ascetics -- nonetheless renouncers, whose careers are typified by their association with ascetics and world-renouncing holy men, and who rule as Dharma Kings. Even Rama's father Dasaratha fits this pattern, because he tried to give up his kingdom to Rama and then, in order not to go back on his word in a vow made years before, banished Rama to fourteen years of exile and died of grief at the pain of separation from his beloved son. Janaka is even more clearly a renouncer, a king who considers his kingdom not his own possession but as belonging to Earth, his wife, who gives away in marriage the daughter he had miraculously found

in a furrow, and then, when she goes into exile, spends his last years contemplating the transience of life and seeking the truth. The Ramayana's Janaka is in that sense consistent with the Janaka of Videha who appears in the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad as a philosopher king seeking the truth about the self (atman) from the sage Yajnavalka either by his own direct questions (IV. 1.1-IV. 2.4 and IV. 3.1-IV. 4.25, a connected sequence of teachings that is one of the most important sections in the Upanisads) or through the questions of priests invited by Janaka to a fire sacrifice (III. 1.1-III. 9.28, where one of the questioners, Gargi Vacaknavi, is a woman, one of the rare few female priest/scholars in the Vedic texts). At the end of this last discourse, the Brahman Vidagdha Sakalya is unable to answer a question put to him by Yajnavalkya, his head falls off, and his bones are taken away by robbers -- no doubt the source of the Ramayana's reference to the fate of Janaka's court Brahmins when he cursed them. One might also note that the other two philosopher/renunciate kings who appear in the Upanisads are also from the eastern Gangetic region: Ajatasatru of Kasi, who teaches about the nature of Brahman and atman in Brihadaranyaka II. 1.1-II. 1.12 and compares himself to Janaka; and Bhadratha, a solar king in the Ikshvaku line to which Rama also belonged -- described in the Puranas as king of Magadha during the time of Krishna -- who had relinquished his throne to his son, gone into the forest to practice extreme austerities (paramam tapas), and was there taught the bulk of the Maitri Upanisad (I. 2-IV. 6) by the sage Sakayanya.

But if Dasaratha is in some sense a renunciate Dharma King in the Ramayana, and Janaka of Videha is a world-renouncing philosopher-king consistent with the Upanisadic Janaka of Videha, the center of the story and the true Dharma King is Rama. Enlisted as a youth of sixteen by the hermit sage Visvamitra to free the sage's forest sanctuary of Raksasas (demons) who were agents of the Demon King Ravana (the anti-hero of the Epic), Rama and his brother Laksmana were taught the use of heavenly weapons and mantras by Visvamitra before the sage took Rama to Videha to meet and win Sita as his bride. Rama's banishment to exile by Dasaratha and the giving of the throne to his younger half-brother Bharata were accepted by him rather than cause his father to forsake his oath and be untruthful, and the course of his exile in the forests to the south beyond the Ganges and Yamuna was set in motion by the tribal Hunter King Guha and the hermit sage Bharadvaja and was aided along the way by the forest sages Atri and Agastya. Near the end of his exile, when Sita was abducted by Ravana, Rama fought and killed the Demon King with the aid of an army of monkeys and bears and rescued Sita for a triumphal return to Ayodhya. Once they returned and Rama assumed the throne, however, he himself banished Sita into exile in the forest (where she stayed with the poet-sage Valmiki, author of the Epic) because his subjects thought it wrong for the king to take back a wife who had been in another's (Ravana's) harem even though her chastity had been proved by the Fire God (Agni). When Sita was finally brought back by Valmiki with her (and Rama's) sons who had been born twelve years before at the start of her exile, she chose to descend into her Mother Earth rather than

remain as queen. Rama, saddened by her loss, gave the kingdom to his sons and entered the world of the gods.

The Ramayana in its final form is a Hindu religious epic of some 25,000 verses. As an epic, it is a story of kings and princes, gods and demons, heroism and battle, victory and defeat. As a religious epic, it tells of the eternal struggle between Good and Evil, gods and demons, in which humans have a role to play and a lesson to learn; it gives instruction in Dharma, and illustrates it with the stories of those who follow it and those who don't; it teaches the importance of truth and doing what is right according to Dharma, and it teaches also the karmic consequences both of intentional evil and of ignorance. As a Hindu religious epic, with its final additions, it identifies the hero Rama as an incarnation of Visnu and as a means of salvation by devotion to him.

Taken overall, however, the Ramayana is also a profound philosophical reflection on the transience of all human achievements in a world in which Time and Death are always the ultimate victors and where everything gained will eventually be lost in the turning of the eternal cycle. This is a message stated over and over again by those who have learned it: most philosophically by the forest sages, hermits, and ascetics who have devoted their lives to this truth, but also by the Hunter King who sees the truth in the natural world around him and by King Janaka who has learned it by his own reflection and study during his years as a ruler. The message of all of these is clear and consistent: those who discover this truth of the transience of all life renounce the world and live out their lives

in contemplation as guides for those who are still on the path to understanding.

The Ramayana can thus be seen at its most fundamental level as the story of Rama's gradual discovery, in his role as a Dharma King, of the truth that Dharma must be followed in order for both cosmic and personal goals to be fulfilled, but that following Dharma requires the renunciation of all personal attachments: for Dasaratha, his kingdom and his son; for Janaka, his kingdom and his daughter; for Rama, his kingdom and his wife. Only Sita, it appears, out of all the protagonists, is the one who as daughter of the Goddess Earth knows and accepts this truth instinctively, and in the end it is she who is given a golden throne in the world of her Mother, Earth, as the reward for her faithfulness and obedience to truth. One need only recall the Buddha's famous Bhumi-sparsa, his touching the Earth as witness to the truth of his vow in the context of Mara's temptations, to recognize that the Buddha's world and that of the Ramayana have much in common.

This evidence suggests that as an early religious epic, before it became in its final form a Hindu epic, the Ramayana -- "the Way of Rama" -- conveyed a message not much different from that of the Buddhists and Jains who shared its eastern Gangetic cultural origins. This suggestion is reinforced by the fact that the Rama story appears in the literature of both Jains and Buddhists, albeit with their own distinctive twists. A number of Jain Ramayanas were written, the earliest of which is apparently the Paumacariya of Vimalasuri (a Prakrit text of the early centuries CE), and Rama

appears as one of the Baladevas in the Jain list of the 63 Salakapurusas (divine personages) that includes the 24 Jainas, 12 Cakravartins, 9 Vasudevas, 9 Baladevas, and 9 Prati-vasudevas. Buddhists in turn appropriated Rama themes in the Jataka stories of the Buddha's past lives, most strikingly in the Dasaratha Jataka (named after Rama's father) in which Rama is portrayed as a bodhisattva figure -- quite possibly before he became an avatara of Visnu in the Hindu appropriation of the Rama epic. (See Paula Richman's Many Ramayanas for further examples.)

Mutual borrowing of characters and stories is of course quite common in rival religious traditions, but the level of borrowing in this case appears to reflect a religious culture into which Rama fits easily alongside the Buddha and Mahavira as a royal renouncer -- a role later also ascribed by the Jains to Chandragupta Maurya, and by Buddhists to Asoka. Historically, the important point is that this cultural/religious world had become, by the time of the Buddha and Mahavira in the sixth century BCE, the locus of the major political powers in India: Magadha, south of the Ganges with its capital first at Rajagriha and later at Pataliputra (Patna); the Vrijian/Vajjian confederacy of nine tribes or clans -- including the Lichchhavis, Videha (which had by then abandoned its monarchical government) and the Jnatrikas (to which Mahavira belonged) -- with its capital at Vaisali on the Gandak River about 30 miles north of Patna; the Kosala kingdom, with capitals at Sravasti on the Rapti and Ayodhya/Saketa on the Sarayu/Ghaghara, which by the Buddha's time also included the former kingdom of Kasi and its capital city of

Benares; the kingdom of Vatsa, with its capital at Kausambi on the south bank of the Yamuna near the Ganges/Yamuna confluence, which controlled the territory to its south toward the Vindhya and the Son valley; and the kingdom of Avanti in the Malwa region, with its main capital at Ujjain (near the old fortified Malwa Culture site of Nagda) and a secondary center at Mahismati on the Narmada (across from the Malwa Culture site of Navdatoli).

All of these emerging powers in North India (i.e., north of the Narmada) were outside the Ganges/Yamuna Doab and the Painted Grey Ware cultural region: Magadha, Kosala, and the Vrijian Confederacy in the eastern Gangetic region (to which might be added the kingdom of Anga east of Magadha, with its capital at Champa on the lower Ganges), all products of the regional cultural process that began in the early second millennium; Avanti in Malwa, with its roots in the earlier Malwa Culture; and Vatsa at Kausambi on the main route between Ujjain and Vidisa in the west, Benares/Varanasi/Kasi and Patna in the east, and Ayodhya/Saketa and Sravasti in the north. It was not that Aryan or Brahmanical influence was totally absent in this crescent of non-Aryan regions that surrounded the Doab on the south and east of the Painted Grey Ware culture; it was rather that Aryan settlement did not reach these regions before they had emerged to a cultural level that resisted further Aryan advance, and so Aryan/Brahmanical influence was in terms of external contact rather than local dominance as it was in the western Doab.

On the evidence, it seems that the main form of such contact came in the persons of itinerant or forest-dwelling teachers,

ascetics, and other sramanas ("strivers") on one level, and migrating Brahmanical priests or priestly families on another level, all of them forced to gain acceptance in non-Aryan culture by their own personal appeal, persuasion, or usefulness rather than by having a ready-made place established for them as was the case in the regions of Aryan settlement and domination. Even in the centers of Aryan culture, however, as we know from the Vedas, there was an ongoing struggle for supremacy between Brahmins and Ksatriyas that lasted probably until Aryan rulers no longer had enough traditional authority to claim precedence and had to rely on Brahmins to give them legitimacy, a stage that corresponded to the decline of the old Aryan warrior tradition and the emergence of what Jan Heesterman calls the "new, rationalized system of ritual" reflected in the priestly ritual texts known as the Brahmanas. The creation of these texts can be dated in the early to middle first millennium BCE, which is also the period of Aryan settlement in the Doab, the emergence of the Painted Grey Ware culture, the beginning of urbanization and the emergence of the non-Aryan cultural regions and kingdoms outside the PGW territory. Contacts between the Aryan and non-Aryan cultural regions thus must be seen from a dual perspective that takes into account the processes at work in both that preceded the rise of Magadha to domination of first the entire non-Aryan region and then the whole of North India, including -- as yet a third perspective -- the Indus Valley region of western India that was invaded as far as Gandhara by Cyrus the Great (550-529 BCE) and became part of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia around

518 as a result of further invasions during the reign of Darius (522-486 BCE).

Since the Persian conquests in western India began during the reign of the first major ruler of Magadha, Bimbisara (ca. 544-493 BCE), and Persian control continued for nearly two centuries down to Alexander's invasion in 326/325 BCE and the rise of the Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta (324-300 BCE), the Persian presence can hardly be ignored as a factor in the complex developments of the sixth century that saw the expansion of Magadha, the rise of the Jain and Buddhist movements in the region of Magadhan control, the beginning of the Northern Black Polished Ware culture that eventually spread throughout North India and southward into the Deccan as far as the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley in the wake of Magadhan expansion, and the appearance of coinage minted to the Persian standard in the context of NBPW culture along with terracotta female figurines and other indications of eastern Gangetic culture. The nature of Persian influence falls largely outside the present survey, but the influence could not have been insignificant in light of the continuing interaction between the Persian-ruled region and other parts of North India.

The Ramayana -- albeit not a text on history -- identifies the youngest of Dasaratha's three wives, Kaikeyi -- the mother of Bharata, and the person responsible for Rama's years in exile -- as the daughter of the king of Kekaya, a region in the upper Indus valley south of Gandhara inhabited at the time of Alexander by a warrior tribe known as the Sibis (who later established a kingdom in

Rajastan in the upper Banas River valley, and to whom the South Indian royal family of the Cholas claimed connection). The Upanisadic sage Uddalaka Aruni, who appears along with Yajnavalkya at Janaka of Videha's sacrifice in the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad (III. 7.1) and presents one of the most influential Upanisadic teachings to his son Svetaketu in the Chandogya Upanisad (VI. 8.1-VI. 16.3), claims (in Brihadaranyaka Upanisad III. 7.1) that he studied with Patancala Kapyā "among the Madras" -- a people or region adjacent to Kekaya in the upper Indus valley. While these textual references are obviously not historical facts per se, they do indicate that the upper Indus valley (the Punjab) and the eastern Ganges valley -- or at least Kosala and Videha -- were considered to share the same cultural world and perhaps to have some special relationship. Given such cultural awareness of the kingdoms of the Punjab, it is in any case hard to imagine that their conquest and rule by the Persian Empire would not be known in some detail by those in other parts of northern India.

But if these literary references are perhaps only suggestive, what is certain historical fact is that western India was part of the Achaemenid Empire as its twentieth satrapy for almost two centuries at a critical stage in Indian political and cultural development. Those who were under Persian rule, moreover, were not all merely passive subjects. The emperor Xerxes (486-465 BCE) recruited Gandharans and Indians for his army to fight in his invasion of Greece in 480, and the Indians -- described by Herodotus as both infantry and cavalry, equipped with bows of cane and iron-

tipped cane arrows -- acquitted themselves so well in the assault on Thermopylae that they were retained by his general Mardonius for the following year's campaign that ended with defeat in the battle of Plataea. We do not know the subsequent history of the Indian troops, but some veterans must certainly have returned home with knowledge of both Persian and Greek military organization and a sense of Achaemenid policies of rule between India and Asia Minor. Indian troops were employed by eastern Persian satrapies down to the time of Alexander, and their cumulative experience could hardly have been unknown east of the Indus Valley.

Trade and commerce continued as before between the eastern Gangetic region and western India, as indicated by the appearance of coinage -- almost certainly a Persian influence -- in the context of Northern Black Polished Ware after ca. 500. The fact that coins do not appear in the Painted Grey Ware sites suggests that this interchange was mainly through the emerging non-Aryan kingdoms east and south of the Yamuna along the line of urban centers first associated with Northern Black Polished Ware. This route can be traced from Pataliputra/Patna in Magadha and Vaisali in the Vijiian/Lichchhavi confederacy westward along the Ganges to Kasi/Varanasi/Benares and then to Kausambi on the lower Yamuna, where the northern and southern routes diverged: southward (or southwestward) the route went from Kausambi to Vidisa, Ujjain, Mahismati, and then across the Narmada into the Deccan; northward (northwestward) it went from Kausambi to Mathura and then westward along several routes that led either to Gandhara across

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the northern Indus valley through the Punjab, or to Sind at the lower end of the Indus valley through Rajasthan and Gujarat.

All of the sites along this route east and south of Mathura from Pataliputra/Patna to Mahismati were important cities and/or political centers by the middle of the sixth century as a result of indigenous developmental processes in the eastern Gangetic and Malwa regions. Their origin and initial local/regional importance thus cannot be ascribed to Persian contact, because they preceded the rise of Achaemenid power under Cyrus the Great (550-529) and the conquest of Gandhara came only at the end of Cyrus' career as part of a campaign to secure his northeast frontier against tribes from Central Asia -- a campaign in which he lost his life fighting in the Oxus region. Bimbisara, however, the first important ruler of Magadha (ca. 544-493), began his reign during the early years of Cyrus' rule and was ruling Magadha at the time of Cyrus' conquest of Gandhara. The appearance of the by then all-powerful Persians at the gateway to India must have opened up new vistas, and he still had 36 years of his reign remaining in which to put this awareness into practice. Western India was added to the Persian Empire in 518 during this latter period, and it would have taken a stupid ruler -- and Bimbisara was not stupid -- not to see both the threat and the potential of this Persian outpost on the opposite side of India. Magadha had yet to consolidate its political control of even the eastern Gangetic region, but the potential for trade was there already and not only Magadha but its rivals to the west -- especially Vatsa with its capital at Kausambi and Avanti with its capital at

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Ujjain -- must have seized this opportunity to enhance their prosperity and strategic position.

It can hardly be coincidence that the four most powerful Indian kingdoms of the sixth century -- Magadha, Kosala (including Kasi), Vatsa, and Avanti -- emerged outside the Painted Grey Ware Culture of the Doab at the same time as the spread of the trade-related Iron-Age Northern Black Polished Ware and the creation of the Persian Empire on the western border of northern India. However these factors may have been related causally, the fuel that powered the collective process seems to have been trade and the stimulus to develop -- and control -- regional resources. Western India, once it became the twentieth satrapy of the Persian Empire, is said by Herodotus to have contributed a third of Darius' revenue in the form of gold dust, some of which may have come from the gold-rich upper Indus tributaries but much of which must also have come from trade. Mathura, a village on the margins of the Painted Grey Ware region for most of the sixth century, became part of the NBP Ware culture by *Mathura* around 500 BCE and played an increasingly important role as an axis of trade routes linking the eastern Ganges region, Malwa, Rajasthan, and western India. In the two centuries between Darius and Alexander's invasion of western India, the infrastructure was clearly being prepared for the rapid expansion of the Mauryan Empire in the wake of Alexander's departure.

Buddhists and Jains were very much a part of this new political-economic culture that was being created outside the center of Aryan culture, and much of what we know about what was

happening in this culture from the sixth century onward comes from Buddhist and Jain writings. Both communities benefited from support by the new political rulers, and both also -- monks and laypersons alike -- took advantage of the increased trade activity and trade routes: monks to spread their messages and religious centers, laypersons to become active participants in the trading activities themselves.

Vedic texts from this same period, however, reflect almost nothing of what was happening outside Madhyadesa, the "Middle Region" centered on the western Doab that had become the base of Aryan culture as Aryavarta, "the land of the Aryans." Nearly everything we know from this culture for the entire first millennium BCE comes from the Vedic and post-Vedic works of Brahman priests, the sruti and smrti texts that deal largely with priestly and household rituals, religious speculation, and the principles and rules of social/religious duty. These texts also indicate major changes taking place, but the changes they focus on are not the political and economic changes taking place in the society around them -- even their own society, much less that of the non-Aryan world -- but rather the changes required to make their rituals more effective, to gain more knowledge of the underlying principles of the rituals and the cosmos they embody, and to achieve by rituals and knowledge both a better life and a more secure afterlife.

To say that there was tension between these two worlds -- the non-Aryan/Buddhist/Jain world on the one hand, and the

Aryan/Brahmanical/Vedic world on the other -- is to understate the case. In the sixth century BCE they were really two different worlds, at least as perceived by their main representatives, or perhaps -- as seen especially by the Brahmans -- two opposite worlds. The non-Vedic world was the continuation of the world of early cultivators, the Indus Civilization, the Malwa and other Chalcolithic agrarian cultures, and the eastern Gangetic culture. It was a world in which the female powers of Nature and Earth were fundamental, and where human life -- like all life -- was seen as an ongoing process of death and rebirth, change and transformation. There was nothing that one could do to change this process in the realm of worldly existence, and there seems to have been no significant sense of any other realm of existence beyond this. — ?

Sacred powers were associated with nature and forces of life and death, and were localized and place oriented. They might be benevolent and life giving, qualities associated generally with earth, water, and plants and particularized in terms of special sacred places, rivers, or trees; or they might be ambivalent or malevolent, especially those associated with dangerous animals such as snakes and tigers, with disease, and with the dead.

The powers at sacred places could be honored by pilgrimage, vows, and gifts of food or personal belongings, and the more ambivalent/malevolent powers could be placated by sacrifices involving the transfer of life-force -- most powerfully in blood sacrifices, but also through offerings of food or acts of personal sacrifice. None of these transactions with sacred powers apparently

required elaborate rituals or specialized priests of the sort that dominated the Vedic/Brahmanical world, and there is no evidence of professional priests or priestly rituals associated with the non-Aryan culture regions prior to the introduction of Brahmanical priests and rituals into the elite circles associated with rulers of the emerging kingdoms. At the village level, and probably for the population at large outside the elite culture, the situation was probably similar to later village culture and the non-Brahmanicized segment of the society where religious and ritual needs are served by a variety of adepts (mediums, tribal shamans, holy men and/or women, etc.) or -- in the case of animal sacrifices -- by members of the community such as barbers, potters, washermen, and others who traditionally handle dangerous and/or polluting activities involving body products, blood, and death.

This world of female powers, natural transformation, sacred earth and sacred places, blood sacrifices, and ritualists who accept pollution on behalf of their community could hardly be more different from the religious world of the Vedic priests as elaborated in the Brahmanas. The performance of Vedic rituals was by the sixth century BCE a highly technical enterprise requiring orally-transmitted Vedic knowledge available only from Brahmins, the use of prescribed patterns of sound formulations (mantras) by specialized priests, properly performed ritual actions (karma), and an understanding of the ritual process as prescribed in the Brahmanas for each group of ritual specialists. The focus of this ritual world was the fire sacrifice (yajna), an ancient Indo-Iranian

(and more remotely, Indo-European) ritual that had become for the Aryans in India the nucleus for a unique priestly-warrior religious system that was first codified in the collection of ritual "hymns" (thought of as formulations of truth in sound, or mantras) known as the Rig Veda. By the early first millennium BCE, this collection had been both expanded with later more clearly priestly sections and supplemented by new mantra collections to form the body of Vedic material known as the Mantra Samhitas or "collections of mantras" that included not only "hymns" but other sound formulas used by ritual priests. It was these collections, along with the evolving ritual system and priestly interpretations of the ritual, that formed the basis for the Brahmanas.

The early Rig Veda hymns reflect a religious perspective in which the most important deity or power (deva) was the warrior-god Indra, victor over the serpent-Asura Vritra in a frequently-cited Rig Veda myth and thus the prototype of conquering Aryan warriors. The fire sacrifice in this early period, as Jan Heesterman has argued, was similarly "bound up with conflict, contest, and battle, corresponding with the mythological motif of the enmity and combat between the conquering gods (devas) and their adversaries, the lordly asuras" (E. of R. 2, p. 297). This "agnostic sacrificial festival," Heesterman says, was "the central institution in an essentially tragic-heroic worldview" whose potential for destructive violence is "preserved in hypertropic form in the all-embracing epic war of the Mahabharata" (*ibid.*).

The task of the Brahmanas, in Heesterman's view, was to reduce the constant threat of "sacrally sanctioned violence, death, and destruction."

The main thrust of this new exposition of ritual practice served to remove the agonistic festival with its unsettling dangers and uncertain outcome from its central position and to replace it with the absolutely failsafe order of a mechanistic, rational rite. To this end, sacrifice was taken out of its agonistic context. This meant the exclusion of the adversary from the place of sacrifice. With that, sacrifice became a strictly personal affair of the individual sacrificer (acting in perfect unison with the priestly technicians of the ritual engaged by him for the purpose). Hence the striking absence of sacra publica from the srauta ritual. Even in the royal rituals the king is just a single sacrificer and as such no different from a commoner. In other words, sacrifice was desocialized and set apart in a separate sphere of its own, transcending the social world. Outside society the sacrificer creates his own conflict-free, perfectly ordered universe, subject only to the absolute rules of the ritual. (ibid.)

In the context of the first millennium BCE, we can see this Brahmanical effort not only as a response to the internal strife generated by the old Aryan warrior ethic but also as a response to new historical realities: the settlement of the Aryan tribes in the upper Ganges/Yamuna valley, as indicated by the Painted Grey Ware

culture and increased concern for the annual agricultural cycle, and the effective barrier to further Aryan eastward expansion posed by the combination of denser forests and the emergence of powerful kingdoms beyond and surrounding the Doab. Classic Aryan warfare based on horse-drawn chariots was ill-suited to the climate and terrain, and traditional raiding parties of Aryan warriors faced not unprotected village cultures but strong regional powers with a material culture more advanced than their own. Early warrior traditions emphasized heroic combat, but perpetuating these traditions in the absence of external opportunities for success meant increasing conflict between rival groups within the Aryan community -- a situation that formed the story line of the epic Mahabharata of later times, which cast its family feud back into this period and portrayed the tragic consequences for heroes and villains alike.

The Brahmanical response, in Heesterman's view, was to remove the warrior element from the sacrificial tradition and replace it with priestly values and deities. Evidence of this can be seen in the dramatic decline in importance of the war-like Indra in the ritual Brahmanas in favor of more Brahmanical deities such as Agni (Fire), Vac (Speech), and Brihaspati/Brahmanaspati (Lord of Priestly/Ritual Power), and the replacement of the Indra vs. Vritra myth with the cosmogonic myth of Prajapati (Lord of Creation) who creates the world by the power of his tapas (heat) and is identified with the fire sacrifice. The creation and maintenance of the world are no longer the result of uncertain combat and warfare, but of

proper performance of the fire sacrifice and the creative use of its tapas -- the "heat" or "energy" associated both with the sacrificial fire Agni (the prime terrestrial deva) and with the internal fervor of the priests who control this creative power by virtue of their knowledge (veda). By the time this transformation had been effected in the Brahmanas, the Brahman priests had effectively displaced Aryan warriors as the defenders of order and controllers of the most powerful instrument for achieving worldly as well as trans-worldly welfare, the Brahmanical fire sacrifice. So at least the priests believed, and so they sought to convince others in order to secure and maintain their increasingly powerful position.

If internal disputes within Aryan society were reduced by reducing the influence of the "agonistic" warrior ethic, however, another category of conflict became more pronounced in the period of the ritual Brahmanas: the conflict between devas and asuras. As Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty) points out (The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology, esp. pp. 57-93), the uncertain distinction between devas and asuras in the early Vedic period (in the Rig Veda and other Mantra Samhitas) was gradually transformed in the Brahmanas into a conflict between asuras on the one hand and the devas and sacrificers on the other. Righteous men (i.e., those who performed Brahmanical sacrifices) sustained the devas by their sacrificial offerings, and the devas in turn protected their faithful sacrificers. In the cosmic conflict described in the mythology of the Brahmanas, asuras represented those forces opposed to this mutually advantageous linkage between the devas and Brahmanical

sacrificers; put more bluntly, from a perspective outside that of the priestly viewpoint, one could say that the asuras were those who threatened the position of Brahman priests and their essential role in sacrificial performances.

If we put this emerging Brahmanical viewpoint in the historical context of the first millennium BCE, we can see why the deva-asura conflict seemed more extreme. The distinction between devas and asuras was not a product of this period, but was rooted in the early Vedic and even earlier Indo-Iranian tradition. But if the Brahmins of the first millennium BCE did not create the distinction, they nonetheless gave it new meaning in terms of what "asuras" now represented to the Aryan priests. Behind the couching of the conflict in mythological terms, we can see some at least of the characteristics assigned to asuras as those of the increasingly powerful -- and therefore threatening -- non-Aryan peoples beyond the boundaries of Aryavarta. As Heesterman puts it:

As party to the conflict the asuras are originally not so much demoniacal opponents and spoilers but rather settled rulers and holders of the goods of life. They are being despoiled by the aggressive wandering deva warriors led by Indra, who aspire to the status of settled lords. As the Satapatha Brahmana has it in a lapidary but probably ancient phrase: 'The devas drove about on wheels, the asuras sat in their halls' (6.1.1.1). But eventually the devas prevail over the asuras, and

that is why the 'moving about warrior' (yayavara) holds sway over the settled people (ksemya), as a parallel passage explains (Taittiriya Samhita 5.2.1.7)" (E. of R. 15, p. 226).

It was undoubtedly the case that earlier Aryan warriors had conquered the settled people of the land up to the eastern Doab, and it may be that the Taittiriya Samhita as one of the earliest Brahmanas (of the so-called "Black" Yajurveda) is reflecting this early success. By the sixth century, however, such a statement would have been more a pious hope than a historical fact. Beyond the limits of Aryan territory by that time there were indeed "lordly asuras" who gave no allegiance to Brahmans and their fire sacrifices. As the Chandogya Upanisad puts it (8.8.5), "they say of one who is not a giver, who has no faith (sraddha), who does not offer sacrifices, that he is an asura, for this is the doctrine of asuras. They adorn the body of the deceased with what they have begged (bhiksha), with clothes and with ornaments, and think that thereby they will win the yonder world." Asuras, in other words, not only do not give gifts to Brahmans, believe in their powers, or offer sacrifices, but they do not avail themselves of Brahmanical rituals in dealing with the dead; they "bury their dead in the ground like asuras," as various Brahmanical texts assert, and must therefore be counted as asuras themselves. As to who these asuras are, the Satapatha Brahmana states clearly that they are "the Easterns and such like people" who, in further deviations from proper practice, make their burial mounds round instead of square and "separate from

the earth, either on a stone basin or a similar thing" (Satapatha Brahmana 13.8.2-4; see P. V. Kane, History of Dharmasastra, Vol. IV, pp. 232 and 247-48).

The passages make clear that the mythological category of asuras has a definite real-life equivalent in the people east of the Aryan region. It is unclear whether the texts cited are before or after the rise of the Buddhist and Jain movements, but their relatively early place in the textual sequence of Brahmanas and Upanisads probably means that they are before the sixth century and thus before the rise of the non-Vedic monastic and ascetic movements among "the Easterns" brought even more cause for concern. Later Brahmanical texts (see The Origins of Evil..., pp. 78-83 and 88-89) add to the characteristics of asuras the fact that they often resort to the practice of asceticism (tapas) to gain power for themselves and thereby threaten the status even of the devas, especially Indra; that is, they circumvent Brahmanical rituals and win rewards for themselves outside the framework of social duty and thus Brahmanical supervision. Even the Upanisadic seers are seen as problematic in this sense, and sometimes make the dangerous claim (as in Brihadaranyaka Up. 1.4.10) that "whoever knows thus, 'I am Brahman,' becomes this all. Even the gods cannot prevent his becoming thus, for he becomes their self (atman). So whoever worships another divinity (than his self) thinking that he is one and (Brahman) another, he knows not. He is like an animal to the gods. As many animals serve a man, so does each man serve the gods. Even if one animal is taken away, it causes displeasure; what

should one say of many (animals)? Therefore it is not pleasing to those (gods) that men should know this."

It could not have been pleasing to Brahman priests, either, that men should make such a claim as this anonymous Upanisadic seer, which comes close to the views ascribed elsewhere to asuras. The seer in question, of course, is presumably himself a Brahman trained in priestly ritual and so immune to being classified as an asura, but the threat of such views to those committed to Vedic ritual practices was nonetheless serious. As Wendy Doniger has noted (Origins of Evil..., p. 64), "the opposition between the gods and demons is purely structural," and the same might be said also of the humans identified with these two categories. The opposition was not in any case one of morality in the ordinary sense, because some asuras were acknowledged to be morally superior to some devas even in Brahmanical texts. Some Hindu versions of the Ramayana story, for example, though not the version by Valmiki, present the asura Ravana as a heroic moral figure, and Jains classify Ravana as well as Rama among the 63 salakapurusas or divine personages. (For further examples, see Paula Richman's Many Ramayanas, U. of Calif. Press, 1991).

* What about
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If the deva-asura contrast was not one of ordinary morality, however, there was nonetheless a moral issue at stake from the Brahmanical standpoint: one was either on the side of the devas and what they stood for, including the Brahmanical rituals that sustained them, or one was not -- and this difference entailed far more than just support for Brahmanical rituals per se. On a

pragmatic level, of course, rejection of Vedic rituals undermined the position of Brahmins as mediators between men and the devas, and they were no more pleased by the potential loss of clients than were the devas at the loss of their "animals" in the Upanisadic quote above. There was more than just selfish priestly interests involved, however; there was an entire worldview that included the organization and support of society, the maintenance of families and family lineages, and the reassurance of a successful transition through death at the end of one's present lifetime. All of this was threatened even within the Aryan community by Upanisadic seers who could say, with Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad (4.4.2), that one who knows the self (atman) becomes an ascetic (muni), does not wish for offspring, and -- having risen above the desire for sons, for wealth, or for worlds -- leads the life of a mendicant (bhiksha-carya). Outside the Aryan world, especially among the asura-like "Easterns", the threat was even greater because they had not even an initial commitment to Brahmanical rituals, family traditions, and treatment of the dead.

By the end of the sixth century BCE, the accumulation of such challenges weighed heavily on the Brahmins who supported their worldview as the only valid defense of the family, society, the devas, and universal order, and who saw their rituals as the only means of achieving both a satisfying life in this world and a successful transition through death to life in the world of the ancestors (pitr-loka). The half-century before 500 BCE saw the rise of both the Buddhist and Jain movements and the emergence of

Magadha as a powerful and expanding kingdom under the non-Aryan king Bimbisara -- a king who not only supported both Buddhists and Jains (and was claimed as a follower by both movements) but whose reputed 500 wives showed a blatant disregard for family lineages (History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II: "The Age of Imperial Unity", pp. 18-22). Monks and ascetics who abandoned their families and illegitimate kings with politically-based harems were all clearly threats to the moral order as Brahmins saw it, and from that point on their task -- if their worldview and their world was to survive -- was to find new ways to support their tradition in the effective absence of a political base within the Aryan community itself from which to do this.

This task occupied Brahmins for at least the next thousand years, from the emergence of Buddhism, Jainism, and Magadhan political power in the sixth century BCE until Brahmanical religion was given priority support by Gupta rulers in the late fourth and early fifth centuries CE -- a period during which Buddhism especially made major gains under a succession of non-Brahmanical rulers from the early dynasties of Magadha through the Mauryan Empire, the Bactrian Greek and Saka kingdoms, and the imperial Kushans. Largely excluded from a favored political position except during the short-lived Sunga dynasty (187-75 BCE), Brahmins concentrated on strengthening their role in family life and creating a comprehensive vision of society and religion based on Brahmanical standards that did not depend upon -- though it would benefit from -- the support of Brahmanical rulers. [A major reason, no doubt, why

India was later perhaps the only country ruled for nearly a millennium by first Muslims and then Christians that still retained its native religion largely intact.]

The Brahmanical effort from the sixth century BCE onward had three related but somewhat distinct agendas: to expand the priestly/Brahmanical role beyond the earlier focus on Vedic fire sacrifices to include domestic rituals as well, create a comprehensive system of family-oriented life-cycle rituals (samskaras), and establish a formal system of stages of life (asramas) for each class (varna) that would emphasize family and social obligations (dharma) as having priority over the search for individual salvation (moksa) and would place the abandonment of family and social ties for a moksa-seeking renouncer (sannyasin) at the end of a person's life after he had satisfied his family and social responsibilities; to give Brahmanical religion greater inclusiveness by extending Brahmanical legitimation to popular religious movements and their deities in exchange for their accommodation to Brahmanical rules and acceptance of Brahmanical authority; and to counteract the growing influence of Buddhism (and, though less urgently, Jainism and other non-Vedic movements) by whatever means were available, including not only intellectual criticism and counter-arguments but the adoption of Buddhist values, symbols, beliefs, and practices by giving them Brahmanical identity and the coopting of Buddhist followers or -- where possible -- Buddhist sacred places and pilgrimage sites.

The first of these agendas was activated even before Buddhism became a serious concern and long before Brahmans were prepared to accept popular non-Vedic religions into their fold. The source of concern in this case was more internal than external, and coincided with the social, political, and economic changes related to urbanization. The older Aryan tribal system, family cohesion, and continuity of lineages all were threatening to break down with an influx of non-Aryans into the emerging cities, greater social mobility, and increasing social and economic stratification. Magadha's expansion after the late sixth century BCE speeded up these processes, but the pressures on the Brahmanical system were present even before this within Aryavarta itself.

Brahmans had earlier transformed the public sacrificial festival of Aryan tribal warriors into a private and self-contained priestly ritual, replacing the original motif of agonistic warfare and combat -- mythologically represented by the deva-asura conflict, and involving actual chariot contests, dice games, and verbal competition -- with a rationalized ritual procedure in which the individual patron/sacrifices (the yajamana) was identified with the sacrifice and with the mystic embodiment of the sacrifice, the creator-god Prajapati, and the outcome depended on the knowledge (veda) and ritual actions (karma) of the priestly participants. (See Heesterman, "Vedism and Brahmanism", in E. of R. 15, pp. 217-242, for details on this and other aspects of the ritual.) This Brahmanical effort was focused on the symbolically complex srauta sacrifices involving a basic set of three fires on separate altars in a

special sacrificial plot that could be extended by additional plots or fires for more elaborate ceremonies (as distinguished from the simpler grihya or "domestic" sacrifices involving a single fire). It is clear that only a few even within the Aryan community had access to the srauta rituals, which required extensive preparation and purification for their performance and obligated the sacrificer (yajamana) not only to cover the expenses of the ritual itself but to reward its priestly performers with lavish gifts (daksinas). One who became what was called an ahitagni, one who established permanent srauta fires for himself outside the household, thus took on a major burden in terms both of maintaining purity and expending his wealth on daily, bimonthly, seasonal, and annual sacrifices and daksinas. Only those with substantial resources to start with could have done this, and among them only those with sincere faith (sraddha) in the efficacy of the ritual would have chosen to do so.

As Heesterman has pointed out, the srauta rituals as a replacement for the earlier sacrificial contests embodied several inherent paradoxes. A sacrificer had to be a married householder, but the sacrifice itself was performed outside the household and at least symbolically in the wilderness or forest (aranya). The householder, moreover, as a srauta sacrificer had to abandon his householder life temporarily and undergo an initiation or consecration ritual (diksa) to enter the sacrificial arena in the manner of a celibate warrior setting out on a quest. This process is most dramatically illustrated in the diksa for the soma sacrifice, the most powerful of the srauta rituals and one embodying both

animal sacrifices and the "killing" of the ritual King Soma, which required that the would-be sacrificer be bathed, shaved, anointed with butter, and wrapped in a black antelope skin inside a hut near the sacred fire like an embryo in the womb, to be ripened by an increase in his tapas (heat or ascetic power) prior to his rebirth as a sacrificer. As a householder-cum-ascetic he must then offer himself as a sacrifice like Prajapati and be redeemed/restored by the power of the ritual -- a ritual which, unlike the earlier sacrificial contests, offered no tangible stakes to be won within the sacrificial procedure itself to satisfy the sacrificer's stated desires or purpose (samkalpa).

Isolated from the surrounding society, from which he had ritually departed to be reborn within the sacrifice, the sacrificer expended his wealth in the faith (sraddha) that the ritual acts (karma) of the sacrifice -- with which he himself was identified -- would produce results that could only be, within the sacrifice itself, intangible. As a tapas-powered ascetic striver within the sacrifice, he could only sacrifice himself and expend his worldly goods; only as a householder outside the sacrifice could he -- or so he hoped -- receive the tangible benefits of those actions he performed within the sacrifice, while the actions he performed as a householder per se -- as far as the Brahmanas were concerned -- had no transcendental benefit at all.

The paradoxes embedded in the srauta sacrifices were paralleled to some degree by the two extremes of those who supported them: those whose worldly position and wealth allowed

them to perform srauta rituals to confirm their present and future security, and those whose sraddha (faith) was such that they were prepared to exhaust their worldly resources in return for transcendental benefits -- especially the promise of "immortality" (amrta) emphasized in the Brahmanas. Brahmans who performed the sacrifices (as distinguished from the patrons or yajamanas) benefitted from the daksina given them by both groups as well as by those who fell between these two extremes. By the sixth century BCE, however, the social and economic changes related to urbanization were affecting all of the patrons of the sranta sacrifices and were not only pushing the two extremes of its supporters in different directions but reducing the relevance of these rituals for those in the middle.

On one end of the spectrum, those who were least attached to worldly goods took their pursuit of transcendental goals further by leaving householder life permanently rather than just temporarily as in the srauta sacrifice. The way had already been prepared for this move by the Brahmanas' emphasis on knowledge of the ritual and its cosmic identifications as necessary for proper or effective ritual performance and as more essential than the ritual acts themselves. This knowledge was of course interior to the sacrificial priest, as was also the tapas or ritual heat that was the energizing force in the cosmos, the sacrifice, and the priest/sacrificer alike, and both knowledge and tapas derived their significance from their relation to brahman, the truth-power of the Vedic mantras and thus of the sacrifice and -- at the cosmic level -- the transcendent principle of

universal order and reality. Given this set of connections, the actual physical ritual is only an external expression of an existent interior reality to which knowledge is the key. In principle, therefore, or so some argued, knowledge of the ritual is not only necessary but sufficient. One who knows the truth of the ritual need not perform the physical ritual externally but may internalize it completely, interiorizing his sacred fires within himself by equating them with his breaths or "vital airs" (pranas) and henceforth performing his rituals by thought alone.

This is the direction that led to the Upanisadic teachings that follow the Brahmanas chronologically and that led eventually to the concept of the sannyasin or "renounced person" who has abandoned all ties to his family and society. As Heesterman notes, "From the individualized sacrificer and his internalized sacrifice there runs a straight line leading to the extramundane world renouncer (samnyasin), who gives up the three aims of mundane life -- the socioreligious duties of the householder (dharma), the acquisition and management of wealth (artha), and sensual gratification (kama) -- to devote himself single-mindedly to a strict inner discipline that results in his liberation from earthly life (moksa)" (E. of R. 15, p. 236). As the yajamana in the srauta ritual offers himself (atman) in the consecration ritual (diksa) to be reborn through tapas as a sacrificer for whom an immortal self (atman) will be created by the sacrifice identified with Prajapati, so the Upanisadic seer seeks by knowledge to know the true atman

identical to the cosmic reality Brahman and thus escape the process of world creation -- and rebirth -- permanently.

Implicit in this Upanisadic quest is a belief that the physical sacrificial process identified with the creator Prajapati cannot create a really permanent self (atman) for the sacrificer. Even Prajapati, as Satapatha Brahmana VI.1 has pointed out, is worn out by his creating and has to be periodically restored by the fire sacrifice. The fire sacrifice is also of limited duration, however, and so its restorative powers are in principle limited not only chronologically but in terms of its finite karmic effects. Once Prajapati and the srauta sacrifice are identified and interlinked as the creative powers of the cosmos, the prospect is raised of "redeath" (punarmrtyu) of the sacrificer when these creative powers finally run out. The Upanisadic seers see the inevitable consequences of redeath as eventual rebirth based on the unexhausted desires of the deceased or on his lack of knowledge of what is truly immortal: the eternal unchanging Brahman, and its identity with the true self (atman) that is consciousness itself free of all individual personal qualities. The Upanisadic goal is thus to attain the ultimate knowledge of Brahman/atman and achieve release (maksa) from rebirth by means of this knowledge and the elimination of desire that it effects.

No such solution was possible within the framework of the Brahmanas, where the concern was for fulfillment of personal desires and purposes (samkalpas) by ritual means. The problem of death was a central motif in srauta rituals even before the problem

of redeath emerged in later Brahmanas such as the Satapatha, but the solution to both within the śrauta system was necessarily a ritual solution based on married householders who alone were entitled to be sacrificers. Within this tightly enclosed system, the solution to these serious problems was by creating more powerful and more elaborate rituals involving soma, the "plant of immortality," an effort that reached its culmination in the complex sacrifice known as the Agnicayana ("piling of the fire altar") described in the Satapatha Brahmana as the means to achieve immortality with no further need for nourishment in the otherworld (see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Hinduism," in E. of R. 6, pp. 338-339).

The Agnicayana is perhaps the most elaborate ritual creation of the śrauta priests both physically and conceptually, and is intended -- as the Satapatha Brahmana makes clear -- to overcome the life-death process and thus conquer redeath by assuring immortality (amṛta, "non-death") in the afterworld. The heart of the ritual spans five days that include consecration (dikṣa) of the sacrificer, animal sacrifices, and a soma sacrifice, but the name comes from the construction of a bird-shaped fire altar using over a thousand specially-shaped bricks piled in five layers that represent simultaneously the five bodily components of Prajapati, the five seasons of the year, and the five regions of space. Beneath the altar, prior to its piling, are buried a variety of items including the skulls of a man, a stallion, a bull, a he-goat, and a ram -- the five suitable sacrificial animals -- and a gold image of a man representing no doubt the sacrificer himself whose immortality is to be established.

Sacrifices, mantras, symbolic ritual actions, soma, fire, Prajapati, the year, and space all are invoked by a retinue of priests to empower the ritual and establish the sacrificer's final place safely beyond the cycle of death and redeath.

If any ritual could solve the problem of death and redeath by ritual means, surely this one could. That it did not is evidenced by the fact that the same school of Vedic priests that produced the Satapatha Brahmana also produced one of the earliest Upanisads, the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad, which begins with Brahmana-like speculation on cosmic identities in the fire sacrifice and then proceeds beyond this with Yajnavalkya's teaching about the problem of rebirth as a result of desire and karma, the nature of the true self (atman), its identity with Brahman, and the consequence of knowledge of "the great unborn atman" for one who knows: he becomes a muni (a silent sage or ascetic) and, "having risen above the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds," he wanders forth to lead the life of a mendicant (bhiksa-carya) (IV.4.22).

It is fair to say that the Brihadaranyaka itself provides the best available proof that the srauta ritual could not solve the most fundamental problem of human existence, the problem of death and afterlife. Even priests from within the srauta system like Yajnavalkya left their household life to find better answers. The same is presumably true of the others who gathered with him at Janaka's sacrifice, and we know that it was true of numerous sramanas by the sixth century BCE. Such defections from faith in

the ritual, even if by only a small percentage of ritual priests, would have called the premises of srauta practice into question.

At the same time as this defection was occurring at one end of the Brahmanical spectrum, the other end of the spectrum was faced with increasingly elaborate srauta rituals of the sort represented by the Agnicayana. Such powerful and prestigious rituals must have been beyond the resources of all but a few wealthy patrons, while continuing uncertainty about redeath in relation to such rituals must have raised doubts about their utility even among the faithful. The pool of potential srauta sacrificers could never have been large even in the best of times, and the combined effects of increasing costs, growing skepticism, and the inroads of urbanization must have reduced that pool to those in the most advantaged positions in the changing society. Those to whom urbanization brought greater wealth and power -- kings and the privileged elite at the top of the stratified urban society -- may have continued to patronize major srauta sacrifices to signify their prestige and their allegiance to Brahmanical tradition, much as later kings performed asvamedhas (horse sacrifices) to certify their legitimacy, but beyond this function the development of the srauta system seems to have reached a dead end by the sixth century BCE. What the Brahmanical tradition needed at that point, as many priests themselves recognized, was not more elaborate sacrifices but greater attention to the needs of ordinary householders whose support was essential but whose concerns were not being met by srauta rituals like the Agnicayana or -- probably for most -- by any form of srauta rituals.

The Brahmanical response to this situation was to create outside the body of "revealed" Vedic teachings (classified as sruti) a new set of teachings known collectively as the Kalpa Sutras that emphasized the "proper rules" (kalpa) not only for srauta rituals but for family and social life as well. These teachings, classified as smṛti ("what is remembered", or "tradition") in distinction to the revealed sruti (the Mantra Samhitas, Brahmanas, and Upanisads), were the first of a vast body of teachings and texts in the smṛiti category that included the Kalpa Sutras, the Dharma Sastras, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and the Puranas. Open in principle to additions, the smṛiti category continued to be expanded with new Dharma Sastras and Puranas well into the second millennium CE and was the major vehicle for developing and propagating Brahmanical thought from the sixth century BCE onward: not only because of the enormous volume and variety of their teachings, but because -- unlike sruti -- all of the later texts could be taught, heard, and studied by everyone and not just by those who had undergone Vedic initiation.

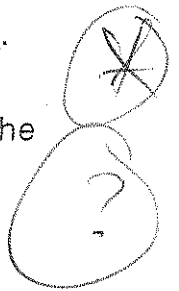
The Kalpa Sutras were essentially transitional texts between sruti and smṛti. Produced within the same specialized priestly schools or lineages that transmitted the sruti teachings, their aphoristic rules relied on those Vedic schools for their authority. The Srauta Sutras, moreover, the earliest of the three divisions of Kalpa Sutras (from perhaps the eighth or seventh centuries BCE), dealt explicitly with rules for performing srauta rituals -- as their name indicates -- and differed from Brahmanas of the same schools

mainly in their aphoristic style and their emphasis on rules per se rather than on the mythic and speculative explanations of rituals that characterized the Brahmanas. The Grihya Sutras, however, though also attached to Vedic schools, broke new ground with their rules for household rituals involving the single domestic fire (aupasana) and -- most importantly -- for family life-cycle rituals (samskaras), while the Dharma Sutras went even further beyond the narrowly-based srauta tradition with rules for the proper duties (dharma) of each of the four social classes (varnas) and each of the four religious lifestyles or "abodes" (asramas) leading to the heavenly world: the asramas of the Vedic student, the householder, the forest hermit, and the renouncer (sannyasin). (See Patrick Olivelle, "Rites of Passage: Hindu Rites" in E. of R. 12, pp. 387-392, and "Samnyasa" in E. of R. 13, pp. 51-53; Heesterman, "Vedism and Brahmanism," in E. of R. 15, pp. 232-233 and 235-236; Hiltebeitel, "Hinduism", in E. of R. 6, pp. 339 and 342-345; and Hopkins, The Hindu Religious Tradition, pp. 73-86.)

Taken together, the Kalpa Sutras represent a major -- and ultimately successful -- effort by Brahmins to affirm their central role in a society undergoing changes and challenges in the context of urbanization, the appearance of wandering seekers and strivers who rejected family life and worldly goods, doubts about the efficacy of srauta rituals to provide security in this life or the afterlife, and, eventually, the emergence of rival religious movements that called into question the entire Vedic/Brahmanical tradition. The Sruta Sutras, produced at the beginning of this period in the early to

middle first millennium BCE, were largely a conservative effort to present the performance of srauta rituals in terms of injunctions and rules that could be followed without concern for their more abstract or metaphysical meaning -- a direction almost exactly the opposite of the ritual and cosmic speculation found in the early Upanisads, and no doubt intentionally so. The Grihya Sutras represented a more radical effort to bring traditional householder rituals and domestic life-cycle ceremonies into conformity with srauta principles under Brahmanical supervision, or, to put it in other terms, to make householder life itself a ritual enterprise based on Brahmanical values and thus elevate it to a religious status equal to that of the formerly more significant srauta sacrifices. This effort was then completed by the Dharma Sutras, which effectively ritualized the entire social system by assigning Brahmanical standards of dharma to every member of society both vertically in terms of varnas and horizontally in terms of asramas.

It is impossible to assign precise dates to these texts, but the main Sruta Sutras appear to be products of the late Brahmana period (ca. 800-600 BCE), the Grihya Sutras were most likely compiled during the same period as the later Upanisads (ca. 600/500-200 BCE), and the earliest Dharma Sutras can probably be dated around 500/400 BCE. (See Hillebrandt, E. of R. 6, pp. 339 and 343, and Ludo Rocher, "Sutra Literature," in E. of R. 14, pp. 183-184.) Much of the material covered in the Dharma Sutras was expanded and organized more systematically -- and to some extent revised to reflect new needs and values -- in the Dharma Sastras, of which the



earliest and most influential was the Manava Dharmasastra or "Laws of Manu" that dates from ca. 200 BCE-100 CE. The Kalpa Sutras as a whole can thus be placed mainly prior to Manu between ca. 800 and 200 BCE, a period that corresponds -- and not coincidentally -- with the period in which the major Upanisads were produced and Aryavanta was going through the successive challenges of urbanization, the rise of the Buddhist and Jain movements, the expansion of Magadha, and the political domination of the Mauryan Empire.

The main Brahmanical defense against the challenges of this period, including the perceived threat of the Upanisadic teachings from within the Vedic tradition itself, was to assert the central religious importance of householder life. Thus, while the Srauta Sutras perpetuated the special srauta sacrifices for an elite group of householders, the effort in the Grihya Sutras and Dharma Sutras was to integrate householder life as a whole into the Brahmanical ritual system not as a precondition for private rituals outside the domestic setting (as in the case of srauta sacrifices) but as the more public context for society's most important ritual events. These rituals as laid out in the Grihya Sutras include domestic versions of seasonal srauta sacrifices, daily sunrise and sunset sacrifices in the domestic fire, daily offerings to the "All-gods" (visvadevas), and a daily householder ritual known as "the five great sacrifices" involving offerings to the sages (rsis), gods, ancestors, guests, and disembodied spirits (bhutas). The greatest attention, however, is given in the Grihya Sutras to family life-cycle rituals

(samskaras) that mark each significant stage of life: marriage (the precondition of householder existence); prenatal rituals; childhood rituals for birth, naming, first solid food, and first haircutting; the ritual of Vedic initiation (upanayana) that marks the child's "second birth" into Vedic study with a guru; the "returning" (samavartana) from Vedic study that marks return to the adult social world and readiness for marriage; marriage (beginning the cycle for the next generation, as the individual's cycle was begun by his parents' marriage); and finally death and the last samskara, the funeral rite of antyeesti, which Vedic texts call a person's "third birth" (i.e., into the World of the Fathers, pitr-loka).

The earlier Vedic tradition assumed a community of householders whose death would be marked by an antyeesti ritual, a final fire sacrifice in which the deceased person was himself the sacrificial victim. The Vedic hymns used for this sacrifice (Rig Veda X. 14-18) invoke the presence of Yama and the pitrs ("fathers"), offer them food and praise, and request their blessing on the living as well as their aid to the deceased in his journey along "the ancient paths" to the place "where our ancient ancestors went." Yama, the first mortal and thus "the first to know (find out) the path for us men," is the King (raja) of the pitrs in a "pasture-land that cannot be taken away," the way to which is guarded by two dogs "having four eyes each" who serve as the messengers of Yama and allow the deceased to pass through to Yama's realm in pitr-loka. There, in "the highest place" (parama), the deceased will be united with the pitrs, Yama, and the cumulative merit of his good deeds (istapurta), and

will "be united with a (new) body [tanu]." (See P. V. Kane, History of Dharma Sastra, Vol IV, pp. 191-201.)

In this early Vedic context, the ant्येष्टि as the deceased person's final sacrifice is a hospitality rite to which the invited pitrs, Yama, and Agni are given offerings of food to make them favorably disposed to the one who now joins them and who will, with their aid, go to pitr-loka with them when they return. Although there are echoes of a warrior/hero motif in some of the hymns, it seems clear that the transition to pitr-loka is the expected outcome for all Aryan householders who maintain a ritual fire (from which the ant्येष्टि funeral pyre is lit). The willing agency of Yama and the pitrs is invoked to aid the transition, but the process itself and the acquiring of a new body in pitr-loka seem to be seen as natural rather than ritually produced. Once established in pitr-loka, the deceased joins the class of pitrs who "live" there under the reign of Yama and receive offerings as a class from those still living in this world. The ant्येष्टि provides the context for the transition from death in this world to an afterlife in pitr-loka, but does not seem to be seen as the cause per se of that transition, which may be characterized as a natural change of status from family-defined membership in a community of Aryan householders in this world to anonymous membership in the class of pitrs in Yama's realm.

This view of death and afterlife had changed substantially by the time of the late Brahmanas and Srauta Sutras and the early Grihya Sutras -- i.e., by the period between ca. 800 and 500 BCE. As noted earlier, sruti texts from this period, both Brahmanas and

Upanisads, reflect a growing concern for the security of one's afterlife existence and a search for greater security either by means of srauta rituals (in the Brahmanas) or by means of knowledge and moksa (in the Upanisads). What characterizes both of these searches, despite their different solutions, is concern for one's own personal or individual status after death in contrast to the more collective solution accepted earlier. It was clearly no longer considered sufficient to "join the pitrs" when one died, which in the earlier Vedic view was to enter an essentially anonymous collective state; what was sought was instead individual/personal immortality (amrta) or individual/personal release (moksa).

It is hard to identify a specific cause or set of causes for this change in the midst of so many changes within and around Aryavarta and Aryan society during this period; it is enough perhaps simply to note the related factors. Within the Vedic tradition, focus on the individual was a distinctive feature already of the srauta rituals, which required a single sacrificer, identified the sacrifice with him, and designated the desired purposes and results of sacrificial action (karma) as his personal karmic product. By the time of the early Upanisads (ca. 800-500 BCE), the concept of karma was being generalized to include all desirous action and not just that performed within the context of srauta rituals, a change reflected not only in the Upanisadic effort to escape from the bondage of desire, karma, and -- in the new belief of Upanisadic seers -- the resulting process of rebirth, but also in the Brahmanical concern to specify rules for proper behavior for social and family life in

general. If an individual was personally responsible for the karmic consequences of all desirous action in perpetuity, then the only alternatives were to escape entirely from the world of desire and karma or to live one's life in such a constant state of ritual purity and proper behavior that no negative karmic consequences would be entailed -- a difficult task at best, and one possible in the Brahmanical view only if one's actions at all times were carried out in a condition of ritual purity in accordance with stipulated behavioral injunctions that removed the element of personal desire and replaced it with the obligations of social/religious duty.

Faced with these alternatives, some who were in a position to do so chose the Upanisadic path to moksa and abandoned their family and social ties. Most people, however, were either unable or unwilling to do this and remained within society as family members and householders. It is clear that the latter was the choice preferred by Brahman priests who were themselves householders and depended on householders for their support, and it was for the householder majority that the Grihya Sutras were produced both as an aid to householder life and to give it greater religious meaning. The viewpoint in these texts is resolutely opposed to the concepts and goals that characterize the Upanisadic quest for maksa, and those portions dealing with the samskaras (life-cycle rituals) make no mention at all either of rebirth or of maksa even in the context of death and the antyesti funeral rituals (see Patrick Olivelle, E. of R. Vol 12, p. 389). On the contrary, it is in this context that the Grihya Sutras emphasize the goal of pitr-loka and add to the earlier Vedic

funeral rituals a new class of rituals for the benefit of one's departed pitrs, a class of rituals that came to be known as Sraddha.

Sraddha rituals per se were entirely a product of the smṛiti tradition. The term sraddha was apparently derived from the term śraddha, "faith," that is frequently mentioned in the Brahmanas as the basis for śrauta rituals, but neither the Brahmanas nor any other early Vedic texts use the term sraddha. Its only appearance in any śruti text, according to P. V. Kane (H.D.S. IV, p. 350), is at the end of Yama's discourse to Naciketas in the Katha Upanisad when he says that "whoever proclaims this highest secret in an assembly of brahmans or devoutly at the time of śraddha, that effects [suits him for] eternity (anantya)" (I. 3. 17). It is evident from this passage that Sraddha rituals were common enough by this time (ca. 500-400 BCE) to need no further explanation, but it is also evident from the singularity of this appearance of the term in the Vedic śruti canon that Sraddha was not within the śrauta tradition but outside it in the tradition of the Grihya and Dharma Sutras.

There was of course nothing new about offerings to the pitrs, nor even -- by the time of the late Brahmanas -- offerings to three specific designated pitrs: the sacrificer's father, paternal grandfather, and paternal great-grandfather. The offerings described in such texts as the Taittiriya and Satapatha Brahmanas, however, were śrauta rituals such as the annual Mahapitryajña and the monthly Pindapitryajña in which offerings -- a cake, fried grains, and milk in the former, rice cakes (pindas) in the latter -- were offered directly to the pitrs within the sacrificial plot. In the

Pindapitryajña, for example, which provided many of the features used in Sraddha rituals, three rice cakes were cooked on the Daksina (southern) fire, two offerings were made to the gods (to Agni and Soma) in the Daksina fire, and the three pindas were then offered to the designated father, grandfather, and great-grandfather on a layer of sacrificial grass (darbha) spread for that purpose. (See Kane, op. cit., pp. 426-433.)

Sraddha rituals, by contrast, did not require the special srauta fires or sacrificial plot but could be performed in one's home, in a screened space nearby, or at sacred places away from one's home, and could utilize even an ordinary domestic fire for cooking. What most clearly distinguished Sraddha rituals, however, was the necessary role of invited brahmins as recipients of the offerings of rice cakes (pindas) made to both gods and pitrs. Despite numerous ritual variations in Sraddhas at different times and places and in different circumstances, the main constants were the "offering of rice-cakes" (pinda-dana) and the feeding (bhojana) of invited brahmins in all the most important versions. In the normative (prakṛti) ritual, the Parvana-sraddha (performed, like the srauta Pindapitryajña, at the time of the new moon), the standard was for two brahmins to be fed in behalf of (as stand-ins for) the gods, and three in behalf of the pitrs -- following the pattern in the srauta Pindapitryajña of two offerings for the gods and three for the pitrs, except that in the Sraddha ritual all of the offerings are given to brahmins instead of being offered in the fire (to the gods) or on strewn darbha grass (to the pitrs). (See Kane, op. cit., pp. 402-406.)

The substitute role of brahmans in the Sraddha rituals was explicitly recognized in one of the earlier smṛiti works, the Apastamba Dharma Sutra (II. 7. 16. 1-3):

Formerly men and gods lived together in this world. The gods went to heaven owing to sacrifices (i.e., as a reward of sacrifices that they performed), but men remained behind. Those among men who perform sacrifices in the same way as the gods did, dwell in the other world (i.e., heaven) with the gods and Brahman. Then (seeing that men lagged behind) Manu promulgated the rite which is designated by the word 'sraddha' and which tends to the salvation (or happiness [sreyas]) of mankind. In this rite the Manes (pitarah) are the deities but the brahmanas (that are fed) are in the place of the ahavanuja fire (in which, in sacrifices to the gods, oblations are offered). (Kane, op. cit., p. 349)

The Laws of Manu makes a similar observation that oblations to the gods at the beginning of a Sraddha ritual may be made "into the hand of a priest" if the performer does not maintain his own srauta fires, because "a twice-born man is the same as fire" and priests "are the gods at the ceremony for the dead" (3.211-213; see Wendy Doniger, The Laws of Manu, p. 65).

The ultimate origin of Vedic sacrifices was early Aryan household hospitality rituals for the devas. The Srauta tradition moved a category of sacrifices from the household setting to a special sacrificial plot with three fires, required the sacrificer to

undergo a preliminary initiation/transformation ritual (dikṣa), and evolved an increasingly complex set of ritual procedures. Sraddha rituals were a reversal of that move from the household to separate private rituals: while they carried back into the household the structure of such śrauta rituals as the Mahapitryajña and the Pindapitryajña, they converted these rituals into something new by placing them within the context of a hospitality ritual in which the householder performer served as the host and offered food to invited guests -- a format similar to that of early Vedic sacrifices, and one that did not require the preparatory dikṣas of śrauta rituals.

Sraddha, however, was not just a reconstituted Vedic hospitality rite or a more accessible version of śrauta rituals, though it was to some extent both. It was, in its most important features, a new Brahmanical creation in which brahmins were essential not because they performed the ritual -- which could in principle be performed by any householder -- but because they took the place of every essential feature of the ritual except that of the performer: they were the invited guests, they represented the devas and pitrs to whom oblations were offered, and they were the fires into which the oblations were placed. In the most fundamental sense, there could be no Sraddha without invited brahmins to receive the food offerings given to the pitrs; and without Sraddha, it was increasingly believed, the deceased could neither be securely transferred to the World of the Fathers (pitṛ-loka) nor sustained there over time. When this ritual was brought together with the household life-cycle rituals (samskaras) in the Grihya Sūtras and

Dharma Sutras, brahmins became the necessary sustainers of householder life from the cradle to the grave -- or, more accurately, from before the cradle to beyond the cremation sacrifice, because they performed both the marriage and procreation rituals that initiated each new life, the rituals that marked each stage of one's lifetime, and the Sraddha rituals that maintained personal existence after death.

Although brahmins were important as priestly ritualists in most of the household samskaras, it was their role as guests and eaters that made them essential in Sraddha rituals. Sraddha ceremonies begin with an invitation on the previous day to brahmins who are qualified by learning, purity, and morality (along with numerous other factors listed in various texts) and who are neither the performer's friends nor his relatives either by membership in the same gotra (patriarchal lineage traced from the ancient sages) or by marriage: i.e., Sraddha explicitly is not a social meal for family and/or friends but a meal for the gods and pitrs. The invited brahmins are greeted on their arrival, their feet are washed, they are given a sip of water (acamana), and they are then seated on strewn darbha grass (as devas were invisibly seated at the sacrificial fire in Vedic sacrifices). A portion of the prepared food, followed by water, is then offered to the two daiva-brahmanas who represent the gods and sit facing east, after which another portion of the food is made into three balls (pindas) for the three most recent generations of pitrs (father, grandfather, and great-grandfather) and is offered in that order, with water, to the three

pitr-brahmanas who sit facing north as their representatives. When both gods and pitrs have been fed in the persons of the representative brahmanas, all of the brahman guests are then fed a meal with the rest of the prepared food until they are satisfied, are given gifts (daksina), and, after saying "let there be refreshment for the dead" (Om! Svadha!), depart -- with the pitr-brahmanas going first in descending order, led by the great-grandfather's representative. (See Kane, op. cit., pp. 433-452, and The Laws of Manu 3. 122-282.)

Most Sraddha rituals followed this general outline, with variations mainly in the number of brahmanas invited and the specific ritual practices followed in different contexts of time or place. Some texts advocated a minimum number of invitees, others advocated larger numbers; some recommended ascetics (yatis) or yogis as even more efficacious than brahman householders to be fed at Sraddha ceremonies, many made provisions for uninvited brahmanas, ascetics, or yogis if they appeared at a Sraddha by chance (i.e., if they did not come intentionally to be fed or given gifts), and some said that if no brahman was available for a Sraddha then effigies of brahmanas made of darbha grass could be substituted during the performance and gifts could later be given to other brahmanas (Kane, op. cit., pp. 308-406). These and other ritual concerns engaged the Brahmanical authors of the Grihya Sutras, Dharma Sutras, and Dharma Sastras from the middle of the first millennium BCE onward, as reflected in the more than 200 pages of

highly condensed discussion of Sraddha rules and practices in Kane's History of Dharma Sastra (Vol. IV, pp. 334-551).

The attention given to Sraddha regulations in the smriti texts indicate the increasing importance of Sraddha in the Brahmanical effort to regulate householder life by increasing the access of ordinary householders to rituals dealing with their most important family concerns. The samskaras (life-cycle rituals) were of course a major part of this effort, but by the time of Dharma Sastras such as The Laws of Manu -- i.e., by around the second or first century BCE -- Sraddha had apparently become more important than all the other householder rituals together. Manu, for example, devotes four chapters with 964 verses to the first two asramas, those of the Vedic student and householder (chapters 2-5), of which some 209 verses are devoted to the life of the Vedic student (2. 41-249), 82 verses to the samskaras of conception through Vedic initiation (2. 25-40) and of marriage (3. 1-66), 56 verses to daily offerings to the gods and spirits (3. 66-93) and offerings to guests (3. 94-121), 165 verses to Sraddha (3. 122-286), and 429 verses to all of the other aspects of householder life. Even taking the treatment of guests in the home as part of the household rituals (which it was in the Brahmanical tradition), there are still more verses devoted to Sraddha (165) than the combined total of verses (138) devoted to all other householder rituals including both the samskaras and offerings to the gods, spirits, and guests. Both of these categories, we might note (i. e., Sraddha and other household rituals), receive far more attention in Manu than does the path of renunciation emphasized in

the asramas of the "forest dweller" (vanaprastha) and "renounced person" (sannyasin), to which only one brief section is devoted (Chapter 6, vss. 1-86). It is thus not that Manu pays little attention to other household rituals or to the general duties of householders, whose way of life is twice praised as the best of all the asramas (3. 77-78 and 6. 89-90, the latter at the end of the discussion of the vanaprastha and sannyasin asrumas); it is rather that Sraddha is given such relative prominence within the various duties of the most important stage of life.

The prominence of Sraddha by the time of Manu can hardly be accidental, but must be the result of a set of values, needs, and concerns that made Sraddha especially important in the context of the latter centuries of the first millennium BCE and the early centuries CE when North India and Aryavarta were under the successive rule of the eastern Gangetic kingdom of Magadha, the non-Aryan Mauryan Empire, Bactrian Greeks, Sakas, and the foreign-based Kushan Empire. There is no doubt that Sraddha was an important factor in the effort by brahmans to expand their influence and gain greater support from non-srauta householders in the absence of a wealthy and powerful Aryan elite, but it must also have served the religious and social needs of householders in order to be used successfully for that purpose. Looked at from this perspective, Sraddha can be seen as an important link in the transition from earlier srauta-dominated Vedic religion to the devotional theism that had gained not only popular support but Brahmanical sanction by the time of the Gupta Empire.

One clue to Sraddha's role in this religious transformation can be found in Manu's statement that it is "more important for the twice-born to perform rituals to the ancestors (pitrs) than to perform rituals to the gods (devas)" (3. 203). This surprising judgment is justified by the claim that "the ancestors are the deities of ancient times" who "have laid down all weapons and are counted among the great" (3. 192). The ancestors, Manu says, have been born from the sages (risis), "from the ancestors come gods and humans", and "from the gods comes the entire universe of living things" (3. 201); "just a little water, given to (the ancestors), with faith (sraddha), in silver cups or cups inlaid with silver, procures an incorruptible reward" (3. 202). Whatever these startling -- and apparently unique -- verses may have meant precisely to their Brahmanical authors, they clearly reflect a religious world very different from that of the Vedic srauta rituals. This religious world, however, is not too different from that of the roughly contemporary Bhagavad Gita, whose prince/teacher Krisna tells his friend and disciple Arjuna that "whoever offers me a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, with devotion (bhakti), that offering of devotion by one who gives himself I accept [literally, 'eat,' 'enjoy']" (Bh. Gita 9. 26).

There are of course significant differences between Manu and the Gita. Both deal in a broad sense with dharma or duty, but Manu is concerned with the particularities of rules and regulations while the Gita is concerned more with the mental attitude of the person who acts. On this latter point, moreover, they totally disagree. Manu

says that although acting out of desire is not approved of, "on earth there is no such thing as no desire" because "desire (kama) is the very root of the conception of a definite intention, and sacrifices are the result of that intention" (2. 2-3). All vows (vrata), duties of restriction (yama), and rituals come from definite intentions and thus desires, but "the man who is properly occupied in these (desires) goes to the world of the immortals, and here on earth he achieves all the desires for which he has conceived an intention" (2. 3-5). Manu on this point thus follows the earlier Vedic srauta tradition in emphasizing the performance of rituals with faith (sraddha) for the satisfaction of desires here on earth and in the afterlife. Sraddha is in this context no different from other rituals in the sense of having desire as a motive: when performed with faith (sraddha), its offerings become "the incorruptible and everlasting (food) of the ancestors in the other world" (3. 275), and these ancestors in turn reward the one who performs the Sraddha in their behalf (3. 259, 283).

The Bhagavad Gita agrees with Manu that a person should perform his own duty (svadharma) rather than that of another even if the former duty is imperfect (see Gita 3. 35 and 18. 47, which parallel Manu 6.66 and 10.97), but teaches in contrast to Manu that even one's own dharma when performed for the sake of personal reward produces karmic consequences that bind one to the cycle of rebirth. One should perform actions and Vedic rituals, but "the results (phala) of actions/rituals (karma) should not be your motive" (Bh. Gita 2. 47; see 2. 45-50 passim). In even more basic conflict

with Manu, moreover, where the concept of desireless intentional action is considered a self-contradiction (Manu 2. 2-3 above), the Gita teaches that the performance of actions for desirous purposes is an error that can be corrected by performing one's own duty (svadharma) without desire -- i.e., without attachment to the fruits (phala) of action. This freedom from attachment to the fruits of action is what the Gita calls "renunciation" (sannyasa): not renunciation of action or of householder life, but abandonment (tyaga) or renunciation (sannyasa) of the personal fruits of action by first realizing that all action is the activity of the qualities of Nature (the gunas of Prakriti) and thus ultimately the Lord's activity, and then, guided by that knowledge and devotion (bhakti) to the Lord, renouncing or sacrificing all of the fruits of one's action to the Lord who is the source of all existence and all action.

While Manu and the Gita agree on the importance of remaining in householder life and performing one's dharma within society, they thus disagree almost completely on the motivation for action. For Manu, as for the srauta tradition, one performs actions -- especially ritual actions -- with faith (sraddha) that proper action will bring the desired intended results. Manu in this sense fits the Gita's description of "the flowery words about numerous kinds of rites aimed at enjoyment (bhoga) and power "spoken by those who are "inspired by desire and regard heaven as their highest goal" (Bh. Gita 2. 42-43). Such claims by the unenlightened, the Gita says, bring on rebirth as a result of desirous actions and so should be rejected: "You are entitled to (ritual) actions, but never to their fruit; never

let the results of actions be your motive" (Bh. Gita 2. 43, 47).

Instead of placing one's faith in rituals to satisfy desires, which they can do only within the transient realm of Prakriti (Nature), one should have faith in the form of devotion to the Lord and surrender all actions to Him.

Fundamental to the Gita's view is the belief that Krisna, the Lord, is the highest reality, the Supreme Person (Purusottama) Who encompasses Nature within Himself but transcends the three qualities or strands (gunas) of Prakriti as the universal Self. The devas and pitrs of the Vedic tradition are in this view within Prakriti and can thus be influenced by -- and participate in -- rituals whose actions and effects are part of the process of Prakriti and its three gunas. What neither rituals nor any other actions can do is transcend Prakriti, so their effects -- both good and/or bad -- necessarily remain within the realm of Prakriti and its gunas as causal factors in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth known as Samsara (which is, in this context, simply a specific example of the process of change and transformation based on causal principles that characterizes Prakriti as a whole). Since only the Lord transcends Prakriti/Samsara, only He can grant salvation from the process of rebirth; those who seek more limited goals by means of rituals or other actions based on desire remain within Samsara. The religious consequence of this in the Gita's view is that "those who are dedicated to the devas (the deva-vratas) go to the devas, those who are dedicated to the pitrs go to the pitrs, those who are dedicated to the bhutas (ghosts or spirits of the dead who have not

been given proper funerary rituals) go to the bhutas, but those who sacrifice to me (i.e., Krishna) go to me" (9. 25).

The "sacrifice" to Krishna in this verse is not a Vedic fire sacrifice, as was made clear in a preceding critique of the "knowers of the Vedas" who perform sacrifices to attain heaven but who, "having enjoyed the vast world of heaven (svarga), rejoin the world of mortals when their merit (punya) is exhausted" (Bh. Gita 9. 20-21a). Such people, Krishna says, "thus following devoutly the dharma of the Veda and craving desires, go and come" (9. 21b). It is not these desire-motivated Vedic sacrifices to whom Krishna will give "secure welfare" (yoga-ksema), but "those who attend upon me with fixed intent while thinking of nothing else" (9. 22). The sacrifice that will bring Krishna's devotees to Him beyond the coming and going of Prakriti/Samsara is the self-sacrifice of devotion (bhakti) that has no motivation for rewards either in this world or in the heaven of devas and pitrs, but seeks only the consciousness of Krishna at all times and in all actions and abandons the fruits of those actions to Him.

Despite its criticism of Vedic rituals based on desire, however, or for that matter of all desirous actions, the Gita does not advocate abandoning action and the performance of sacrifices. Ritual action is an inseparable part of one's duty (svadharma), and attachment to inaction is as wrong as acting to satisfy personal desires: "Do not let the results of actions be your motive, nor be attached to inaction" (2. 47). The maintenance of the world depends upon proper action, both the performance of one's social and family

duties and the performance of rituals, and the best people should set an example for others by doing these acts without self-interest as exemplars in the past have done: "It was only by action that Janaka and others realized perfection; so also should you act, looking only to what holds the world together" (3.20). The supreme example of such desireless action, moreover, is Krisna himself, who has "no task at all to accomplish in these three worlds, and nothing to obtain that I do not already have," but who is nonetheless always engaged in action so that these worlds will not be destroyed by people who would otherwise be misled into not performing their duties. Thus, "as the ignorant act with attachment to their work, so the wise man should act without attachment to maintain the order of the world" (3. 21-25).

The problem with prescribed rituals is thus not, for the Gita, rituals per se, but the motivation and the object of ritual performance. Clearly rituals should not be performed for personal gain in the Gita's view, but the problem goes beyond simply one of selfish motivation; it is also one of ignorance, in the sense that people do not know the true Lord who transcends the realm of Prakriti/Samsara and so they offer oblations to lesser devas and pitrs within the causal cycle. As long as no higher reality is known, the results of these oblations also remain within the causal cycle of Prakriti/Samsara and end eventually in rebirth. The solution to this problem for the Gita therefore involves not only desireless action but its inseparable correlate: knowledge of the real recipient of all oblations and the goal and agent of all actions, the Lord Himself. For

the Gita, moreover, these two essential components -- the discipline of selfless action (karma-yoga) and the discipline of transcendent knowledge (jñāna-yoga) -- can best be realized by means of the discipline of devotion (bhakti-yoga): the dedication of one's thoughts and actions to the Lord.

These concepts are interwoven throughout the Gita and come together in different ways in different contexts, usually in a form that provides new devotional interpretations of Brahmanical institutions such as sacrifice (yajña) or renunciation (sannyasa), gives new devotional meanings to traditional terms such as knowledge (jñāna), action (karma) and duty (dharma), or introduces new theistic principles such as divine incarnations (avataaras) or the Samkhya explanation of the Lord's cosmic reality as both Prakriti (Nature) and Purusa (Person, Spirit, Soul). One of the most important of these conjunctions occurs in Chapter 9, which begins with Krisna's explanation of His creation of the world out of His Nature (Prakriti) at the beginning of each eon (kalpa) and the return of all creatures (bhutas) to His Nature at the end of each kalpa (9. 4-8), continues with the statement noted earlier that he will accept "a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water" from one who offers them with devotion (9. 26), and includes the promise of salvation to "people of low origins, women, vaisyas or even sundras" if they rely on Him (9. 32). This is without doubt the most explicitly revolutionary passage in the Gita, and like many other revolutions in the Gita it involves the reinterpretation of traditional Brahmanical institutions and concepts. What is most striking about this passage, however, is not

just its revolutionary claim of salvation for lowly devotees but the fact that the institution being reinterpreted for that purpose is the institution of Sraddha.

As is typical of the Gita's approach throughout, it does not make its reference to Sraddha explicit but evokes it indirectly and ambiguously. To begin with, there is a play on the double meaning of the term bhuta- (past ppl. of bhu, "to become, be, arise, come into being"), which as an adjective means "become, been, actually happened, real" but as a neuter noun means both "that which is, any living being" and also "a spirit, the ghost of a deceased person" (Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, pp. 760-761).

Bhuta- in a variety of combinations and forms appears 12 times in Chapter 9. The first 10 appearances of the term are in verses 4-13 in the context of Krisna's explanation of how He brings forth "this entire aggregate of beings" at the beginning of each kalpa (9. 8) and, while present in the world in His human form (manusim tanum), is in His higher nature (param bhavam) the "Great Lord of Beings" (Bhutamahesvara) (9. 11) and the "Source of Beings" (Bhutadi) (9. 13). In these passages, there is no doubt that the term bhuta- refers to all living beings -- whether divine, human, or animal -- that have been created out of the Lord's divine Nature (daivi prakrti) (9. 13).

Beginning with verse 14, however, Krisna moves from the discussion of His relation to the world as its creator to the topic of how He is to be worshipped by those in the world. Those who are always disciplined by devotion, Krisna says, worship Him with praise and firm-vowed resolve whether they think of him in terms of

His unity (ekatva) or His diversity (prthaktva) as the manifold Lord "whose face is turned everywhere" (visvatomukha) (9. 15; see also 10. 33 and 11. 11). To illustrate His diversity and manifold "faces," Krishna then explains that He is the various forms of sacrifice, the offering (svadha) to the pitrs, the mantra, the fire, and the offerings in the fire as well as the objects of worship; He is the father (pitr) of this world, its mother (matr), its establisher/ordainer (dhatr), and its grandfather (pitamaha) (9. 16-17a); He is both immortality (amrta), and death (mrtyu), being and non-being (sat and asat) (9. 19). Sacrificers who fail to recognize Krishna's absolute universality and seek personal rewards for their actions cannot escape the bondage of rebirth because their offerings are made for themselves (9. 20-21), but to those who serve Krishna alone ("whose minds are not on others," anassyamanas; see also 9. 13). He brings "secure welfare" (yoga-ksema) (9. 23; see references to 9. 20-23 above).

What is at stake here in the Gita's teaching is not the issue of practice but of understanding. The followers of Krishna did not object to Vedic rituals per se, because they -- like all actions -- were seen as part of Krishna's own Nature (Prakriti). Their objection was rather to those who followed the Vedas, their gods, and their goals as the highest truth and did not see them as merely manifestations of the Lord. Even these who are "devotees of other devas" are not totally wrong if their devotion is "with faith" (sraddha), because they are really sacrificing to Krishna Who is the "recipient (bhoktr, literally 'eater' or 'enjoyer') of all sacrifices" and

the "master/lord (prabhu) of all sacrifices" (9. 23-24a). To the extent that they do not recognize Him as the true recipient, however, they "sink down" (9. 24b).

It is immediately after this discussion that Krisna proclaims the teaching noted earlier: "Those who are dedicated to the devas go to the devas, those who are dedicated to the pitrs go to the pitrs, those who give offerings to the bhutas (spirits of the dead) go to the bhutas, but those who sacrifice to Me go to Me. Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, that offering of devotion by one who gives himself I accept" (9. 25-26). Here the term bhuta- appears again, but now with an apparently different meaning than it had earlier in chapter 9 (verses 4-13) in the context of Krisna's creation of the world and all "beings" (bhutas). In these later verses, the context is that of rituals where the term bhutas refers to "beings" of a special sort such as tutelary deities of the household, directional deities, and disembodied spirits of the dead -- the latter the most significant in common usage, where the term bhutas usually refers to "ghosts" or "goblins".

The specific context of the reference to devas, pitrs, and bhutas in 9. 25 is almost certainly the smriti ritual known as the "Five Great Sacrifices" (pañca-makayajña), one of the most important daily householder obligations from the Grihya Sutras onward. As described in The Laws of Manu (3. 67-121), the Five Great Sacrifices included the brahma-yajña, a "sacrifice" to the cosmic/Vedic reality Brahman and to the sages (risis) by means of Vedic study and/or recitation, and four sacrifices consisting of food

offerings: the deva-yajña, offerings in the domestic fire to the devas or visvadevas ("All-gods"); the bhuta-yajña, propitiatory offerings known as bali scattered or thrown in different directions to the bhutas; the pitr-yajña, offerings of food in the form of pindas ("balls," usually rice-balls) to the pitrs and involving also, according to Manu, the feeding of a brahman with "food, or water, or milk, roots, or fruits" as "a means of pleasing the ancestors" (3. 82-83); and manusya-yajña ("sacrifice to men"), the feeding of a guest (preferably a brahman, but separate from the feeding of a brahman in the pitr-yajña according to Manu 3. 83) from food prepared for the Five Great Sacrifices after all of the previous sacrifices have been made but before the members of the household eat the remainder as their meal (3. 116-118).

Krisna's statements in Gita 9. 25-26 become more understandable in this context, because they appear to parallel exactly the four food offerings (the paka-yajñas or "cooked sacrifices") of the Five Great Sacrifices: i.e., the sacrifices to devas, pitrs, bhutas, and a guest. If we assume this parallel, then Krisna in 9. 25 falls into the category of the human (manusya) guest: "Those who are dedicated to the devas go to the devas, those dedicated to the pitrs go to the pitrs, those who give offerings to the bhutas go to the bhutas, but those who sacrifice to Me go to Me." Krisna has already identified Himself earlier in this chapter as the "Great Lord of Beings (bhutas)" in 9. 11, as the "Father (pitr) of this world" (9. 17), as the one who really receives the offerings to other devas (9. 23), and as "the enjoyer/eater (bhotr) of all sacrifices"

(9. 24), so in one sense the offerings to devas, pitrs, and bhutas belong to and go to Him already even if those who make the offerings do not realize it. His role as guest, however, is special, because the guest is the only explicitly human recipient of sacrifices and thus the only one who can be identified with the human incarnation (avatara, "descent") of the Lord.

The prototypical ritual guest in the smṛiti tradition is of course the brahman guest at the Sraद्धa ceremony who eats offerings to the pitrs. Sraद्धa was technically a separate ritual from the daily Five Great Sacrifices in the Grihya Sutras, but by the time of Manu -- or at least in Manu itself -- the offering to the pitrs in the daily Five Great Sacrifices was also called a Sraद्धa ceremony: "Day after day at the Sraद्धa he should offer what gives pleasure to the pitrs: food, or water, or milk, roots, or fruits. He should feed a brahman, even if it is only one, as a means of pleasing the pitrs during the ritual that is part of the Five Great Sacrifices; but he should not feed any twice-born (brahman) at this time for the purposes of fulfilling the ritual to the All-gods [the visvadevas]" (3. 82-83). The meaning of the last statement in this passage seems to be that the offerings to the All-gods in the Five Great Sacrifices must be made in the domestic fire and not offered to guest-substitutes (the daiva-brahmans) as is done in the regular Sraद्धa ceremony performed apart from the Five Great Sacrifices: the guest in the Five Great Sacrifices, in other words, represents only the pitrs and not the devas, and the Sraद्धa aspect of the pitr-yajña component is confined to the human ancestors and the guest -- who

may, apparently, serve both as the pitr-brahman in the pitr-yajña and also as the guest to be fed in the manusya-yajña (see Manu 3. 94-98).

But however Manu may have understood the role of the guest in the Five Great Sacrifices as a whole or in the pitr-yajña portion of these daily rituals, the important thing is that the Gita seems clearly to identify Krishna's role in the world as that of one who is to be honored by analogy with the brahman guest in offerings to the pitrs. As the guest in Manu 3. 82 is to be offered "food, or water, or milk, roots, or fruits" because they give pleasure to the pitrs, so Krishna says in the Gita that He accepts "a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water" (9. 26) -- the main difference being that the offering to Krishna is to be given with devotion (bhakti) instead of only with faith (sraddha) in the ritual. It is hard to avoid the sense of a rather typical Gita-like play on words here, because Krishna is not the substitute guest in the sraddha-based Sraddha ritual, but the incarnate Lord in human form (manusi tanu in Gita 9. 11) who is not a substitute for the pitrs but is the true Father, Mother, and Grandfather of the world -- i.e., He is the true Pitr who has Himself entered the world as an avatara in human form as the divine Guest to save those who offer Him even a sip of water (Manu 3. 96; Gita 9. 26) in devotion.

The problem of understanding, as Krishna makes clear, is that "the deluded disregard Me in My human form (manusim tanum), being ignorant of My higher nature as the Great Lord of Beings (bhuta-mahesvara)" (Gita 9.11). Arjuna in the Gita also had this problem

initially because he had known Krishna earlier only as his princely friend and charioteer, and it is to change this limited perspective that Krishna in Chapter 11 gives him temporarily "divine sight" so he can see the Lord's universal form (11. 8). In the vision that follows, Krishna reveals His "supreme majestic form with countless mouths and eyes" (11. 10), bright as "the light of a thousand suns" (11. 12), with "mouths that are blazing fires" (11. 19) that "bristle with fangs and resemble the fire at the end of the eon" (11. 25). As Arjuna watches in awe and terror, he sees the "heroic rulers of earth" who have assembled for the Mahabharata's great war streaming "like moths on the wing" into Krishna's "flame-licked mouths" to perish in them (11. 28-29) in a forecast of the impending battle, and sees Krishna "greedily licking [His] lips to devour these worlds entire with [His] flickering mouths" (11.30).

When Arjuna asks, "Who are you, so dread?" (11. 31), Krishna replies that "I am Time (Kala) grown ripe, the destroyer of the world" (11. 32), and explains that none of the warriors in either army will survive because He has "doomed them ages ago" (11. 33). Arjuna by fighting will be merely an instrument of the Lord (11. 33), so he should -- as Krishna has said several times before and confirms at the end of the chapter (11. 55) -- do his duty as a warrior without self-interest or attachment to the fruits of his actions (which are, as Krishna has already made clear, really Krishna's alone). Arjuna's response out of his terror at the vision is to praise Krishna, beg forgiveness for treating Him like an ordinary person, ask that He bear with him "as a father with son, as a friend with friend, as a

lover with his beloved" (11. 44), and plead that Krisna show him "the body I have known" (11. 45). Krisna then "shows him once more his form of before" (11. 50), his "gentle human form (manusam rupam saumyam)" (11. 51), and explains that "Thus, as I am and as you have seen Me, I cannot be seen with the aid of the Vedas, austerities, gifts, and sacrifices; only through exclusive devotion (bhakti) can I be seen thus, and known as I really am" (11. 53-54).

Numerous identities and connections are made throughout this chapter, which many see as the real religious core of the Gita. One of the most important of these connections, with resonance back to Chapter 9, is made in the course of Arjuna's praise of Krisna and his request for forgiveness for treating Him as a friend instead of realizing His divine nature. Recognizing his mistake, he now tells Krisna: "You are the Father (Pitr) of the moving and the unmoving world, and its venerable Teacher (guru) worthy of honor/worship (puiya)" (11. 43). This is the second of two occurrences in the Gita of the related terms puja ("honor, worship") and puiya ("worthy of honor/worship"), the first being Arjuna's description of his grandfatherly eldest relative Bhisma and his family's revered teacher Drona as "deserving of puja" (2. 4). It can be no coincidence in the Gita's careful overall structure of progressive revelation that the only two uses of the terms puja/puiya are in relation to an ancestor/teacher pairing: the humans Bhisma and Drona in 2. 4 (both soon to die in the coming battle as the successive commanders of the Kaurava army of Dhritarastra's sons who opposed the Pandava army of Arjuna and his brothers); and the divine/human Krisna in

11. 43, who is both the ancestors -- the father of the world (9. 17 and 11. 43), its mother (9. 17), its grandfather (9. 17), and its great-grandfather Prajapati, the Creator (11. 39) -- and also the guru (of Arjuna in 2. 7ff., and of the world in 11. 43). It should also be noted that The Book of the Bhagavad Gita in the Mahabharata (Chapters 14-40 of the Sixth Book, the Bhisma-parvan, of which Chapters 23-40 constitute the Bhagavad Gita proper) begins with the announcement of the death of Bhisma in the battle, making the Gita part of the explanation of why and how Bhisma's death occurred and making Bhisma already a dead ancestor of the warring Kaurava and Pandava cousins within the larger frame-story that contains the Gita.

It is too much to say that the entire Gita reflects the symbolism of the Sraddha ritual or that it is as a whole a reflection on death -- though a case could be made for the latter, especially in light of Bhisma's death as the occasion for the sage Samjaya's transmission of the Gita to Dhritarastra as part of his explanation of that death. Death certainly is a major motif in the Gita as it is in the frame-story, where Dhritarastra's response to the news of Bhisma's death is to ask, "That dangerous and inhospitable gambling den on the battlefield, where the carpet for the dicing had been spread out with the bodies of men, elephants, and horses, and the dice rolled with the arrows, spears, clubs, swords, and javelins -- what slow-witted warrior gamblers entered that den to gamble for the fearful stakes of their lives? Who won? Who lost?"

(Mahabharata 6.15.66; see van Buitenen, The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata, pp.1-3, 45-47). Arjuna's dilemma at the beginning of

the Gita is about death, specifically the problem posed by his possibly killing his own relatives or teachers in the impending battle, and the Gita could be understood in one sense as an extended answer to that problem on at least two different levels: metaphysically, with Krisna's initial teaching to Arjuna that death applies only to the bodies of the indestructible embodied one who, "unborn, unending, eternal and ancient, is not killed when the body is killed" (2. 20; see 4. 6, where Krisna identifies Himself as that unborn and indestructible "Lord of Beings"); and theologically, with Krisna's revelation that He is "everlasting Time" and "all-snatching Death" (10. 33b-34a) who has long since doomed all these warriors to die (11. 33-34).

Nevertheless, despite this concern about death as a major issue, death is by no means the only important issue in the Gita. The central teaching of the Gita for most interpreters is that a person should perform his own duty (sva-dharma) in accordance with his own nature (sva-bhava) without concern for the fruits of his actions, and that the best way to achieve the desireless state required for such disinterested action -- i. e., for renunciation (sannyasa or tyaga) of the fruits -- is by performing all action with devotion (bhakti) to the Lord, offering all of the fruits of one's action to Him as a sacrifice. What makes such devotion possible, however, is the Lord's appearance in the world as a divine avatara ("descent") in human form to be an exemplar of disinterested action (2. 22-25), to restore dharma (3. 6-8), and to make Himself known to

His devotees in both His transcendent and immanent natures -- i. e., as both the Supreme Reality and as a human incarnation (11. 8-54).

The concept of a divine avatrara of this sort was new at the time of the Gita, at least within the Brahmanical tradition. The devas were believed to descend and be present in the sacrificial plot at Vedic fire sacrifices, but they never became visible or took human form, and the brahmans who joined them there were called devas (as in Manu 9. 317 and 319) or lords of the universe (as in Manu 1. 93 and 9. 245) because of their first-born origin from the mouth of the Creator Purusa/Prajapati/Brahma (Manu 1. 93-94), their knowledge of the Vedas and control of the powerful Vedic sacrifices (Manu 1. 93, 9. 245, and 9. 315-319), and because it was "through [their] mouth that those (devas) in the triple heaven always eat their offerings, and the ancestors eat their offerings" (Manu 1. 95). Vedic devas in the Brahmanical tradition thus did not descend and become incarnate as humans, and brahmans were humans who had qualities and powers like the devas (especially like Agni, the deva of fire, as in Manu 9. 317-318), but were not avatars.

Kings in some respects were closer to the avatara concept, at least as The Laws of Manu defined them. "When this world was without a king and people ran about in all directions out of fear," Manu says (7.3), "the Lord [i.e., Brahma the Creator] emitted a king in order to guard this entire realm, taking lasting elements from Indra, the Wind, Yama, the Sun, Fire, Varuna, the Moon, and (Kubera) the Lord of Wealth" (7. 4), and continues:

Because a king is made from particles of these lords of the gods, therefore he surpasses all living beings in brilliant energy, and, like the Sun, he burns eyes and hearts, and no one on earth is able even to look at him. Through his special power he becomes Fire and Wind; he is the Sun and the Moon; and he is (Yama) the King of Justice, Kubera, Varuna, and great Indra [the four directional deities or Lords of the Quarters]. Even a boy king should not be treated with disrespect, with the thought, "He is just a human being;" for this is a great deity standing there in the form of a man. (7. 5-8)

The sentiment expressed in this statement is similar to the Gita's concern to establish the special status of Krisna's human form over against the views of "the deluded" who "look down on [Him] with contempt" (Gita 9. 11), but kings even in Manu's claim for their exalted status were not direct avatars of a specific deva; they were "emitted" by Brahma as a class embodying "particles" or qualities of a variety of devas to serve as worldly protectors of the people. Though he was endowed with divine attributes, "made of the brilliant energy of all (the gods)" (7. 11), and "a great deity (devata)...in the form of a man" (7. 8), a king nonetheless had none of the power of devas or even of brahmans to control or convey salvation beyond this world. Kings, moreover, as Manu makes abundantly clear in chapters 7 and 8, were all too likely to fail in their duties or misuse their power for selfish purposes. Human kings remained human, no matter how divine they might be considered in some respects, and a king's role within the

Brahmanical system was confined to upholding dharma and protecting the classes and stages of life by wielding the "rod of punishment" (danda) against the enemies of order within and outside his kingdom (Manu 7. 13-35). Kings were granted control of the instruments of worldly power to carry out this function as men of action, but the most important instrument of power -- the Vedic fire sacrifice, which alone had trans-worldly effects -- was entirely in the control of brahmans as men of knowledge. Kings were thus mandated to maintain order and preserve dharma in the world, but were excluded from the means to provide any trans-worldly rewards except through the agency of brahmans.

None of these existing Brahmanical models -- Vedic devas, brahmans, and kings -- supported either the avatara concept in general or the particular concept of Krishna as an avatara that was central to the emerging Bhagavata tradition whose views informed the Gita's devotional theology. Another possible model, that of a traditional renunciate or sannyasin, was likewise unsuitable not only because Krishna was a householder and princely warrior but because the Gita's central message was the importance of remaining in society and performing the dharma suited to one's class and nature, while the Brahmanical concept of renunciation (sannyasa or tyaga) in the Dharma Sutra and Dharma Sastra texts was confined to the final stage of life in which ordinary social duty was abandoned and one lived as a wandering ascetic (parivrajaka) as described in Manu 6. 33-85. If Bhagavatas wanted Brahmanical legitimation for their belief in the prince/teacher Krishna as a divine avatara in

human form, however, that legitimation had to be based to some extent on the use of existing Brahmanical values or models: not to the extent of accepting the traditional conceptions of devas, brahmans, gurus, kings, and renunciates that allowed no place for the human prince Krisna as a divine avatara, but to the extent of using the existing categories as the framework for a new religious system in which all of the earlier concepts and models were reinterpreted -- a delicate balance between tradition and innovation that found its first and most influential expression in the Gita.

The situation faced by the Bhagavatas in the early second century BCE was not unlike the Christian need two centuries later to distinguish the incarnate Jesus Christ from existing models such as priests, kings, teachers, celibate ascetics and popular Messiahs, while at the same time drawing on all of these for legitimation. The problem for Bhagavatas -- and thus for the Gita -- was similarly to distinguish Krisna's divine incarnation as a human prince and teacher from both devas who did not take human form in their full reality (i.e., were not fully born into the world) and from human exemplars such as brahmans, kings, gurus, and renunciates who were not divine, while at the same time using these elements of the Brahmanical tradition to legitimate their claims for Krisna. There can be little doubt that the arguments made for this purpose were made by those who already worshipped Krisna as divine. Their arguments, and the form of those arguments, were made not to convince themselves but to convince others: in the case of the Gita, and for most subsequent Krisnaite and Vaisnavite theology, those who accepted the validity

of the Brahmanical tradition and required its sanction if they were to accept devotion to Krisna as valid also. But while those whose views appear in the Gita -- those who were already Bhagavatas -- may not have required such legitimation to make them devotees, they undoubtedly chose the terms of their argument not just to persuade others but to express as clearly as they could within the Brahmanical context their own convictions about Krisna.

There is no reason to suppose that the Bhagavatas themselves rejected the basic validity of Brahmanical teachings and practices. Indeed, the Gita throughout reflects a respect for Brahmanical traditions that is surely more than a politic recognition of orthodox authority, and the level of brahmanical knowledge evidenced in the Gita's teachings could only be the product of serious immersion in Vedic/Brahmanical study. What the Gita also reflects, however, is the Bhagavatas' unwillingness to give Brahmanical values and concepts priority over the central message of devotion to Krisna. The result is a statement of Krisna devotional teachings in which Brahmanical terms and concepts are used in much the same way as the Christian New Testament later used Jewish and Greek terms and Hebrew scriptures, or Buddhist Mahayana texts used earlier Buddhist terms and concepts. The Gita thus acknowledges the Brahmanical tradition in a way that it does not, by contrast, acknowledge the Buddhist or Jain traditions, and it is in that sense a Brahmanical text within the larger and overwhelmingly Brahmanical Mahabharata. Its language and most of its basic concepts are taken from the Brahmanical tradition, and it is clearly to the Brahmanical tradition

that it appeals for validation. What it uses, however, it also reinterprets to fit the needs of its own central message that Krishna is the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Person (Purusottama) who transcends the impersonal Brahman, who has "come into being" in the world by birth as a human in order to restore dharma and offer salvation to those who are single-mindedly devoted to Him. (See Friedhelm Hardy, Viraha-Bhakti, pp. 21-24).

There is no doubt that the Gita shapes this central message to fit within the verbal and conceptual framework of Brahmanical thought, so much so that in many critical places one can read the Gita either in terms of more traditional Brahmanical views or in a more radical devotional way in which all of the basic Brahmanical concepts are transformed and reinterpreted; this much is clear from the commentarial tradition that spans the full range of religious views from orthodox to revolutionary and reflects the intentional ambiguity that gave the Gita both its initial Brahmanical acceptance and its continuing religious vitality. There is equally no doubt, however, that the Bhagavatas who carried out this Brahmanizing process had a prior commitment to the deified warrior prince Vasudeva/Krishna, and it seems almost certain that the aspects of Brahmanical thought and practice that they used in this effort would have been chosen to fit their prior views as closely as possible. If this is so, then is it possible to see the shape of these prior views beneath the surface of the Brahmanical framework constructed to give them legitimizing expression? Or, to put the question more

directly, what was the Bhagavata religion before it found its first systemic textual expression in the Bhagavad Gita?

The Gita itself provides little explicit help in answering this question, thanks to the skill with which its message is presented, and before the Gita we have only a few scattered bits of archaeological, sculptural, and inscriptional evidence of a religion dedicated to Vasudeva/Krisna. Taken together in a kind of triangulation process, however, the Gita and the pre-Gita evidence provide at least a rough outline of the Bhagavata tradition before it became part of the Brahmanical religious system.

The first notice of a special status for Vasudeva comes in the fourth century BCE grammarian Panini's Astadhyayi ("Eight Chapters [on Grammar]") in a discussion of suffixes denoting bhakti -- which in the context has the meanings of "liking" things, "being attached to" (places), or "being loyal to" (kings, warriors, etc.). In his typically very concise style, Panini lists Vasudeva and Arjuna separate from the general category of ksatriyas in indicating words to which such suffixes may be added, prompting the second century commentator Patañjali (ca. the end of the Mauryan Empire) to suggest that Vasudeva was already for Panini more than a ksatriya and was considered "one to be honored/worshipped" (tatra-bhavan) (Hardy, op. cit., pp. 21-26). While clearly not proof that Vasudeva was considered a deity by Panini's time (as the co-listed Arjuna almost certainly was not), these two citations indicate that Panini considered Vasudeva (and with him Arjuna, the Pandava warrior-prince who became Vasudeva/Krisna's student in the Gita) distinct

from the ordinary class of ksatriyas as early as the fourth century BCE, and that Patañjali in the second century credited this distinction to the fact that Vasudeva was already by Panini's time -- as he was by the time of Patañjali -- a "worshipful one." (See R. G. Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism, Saivism, and Minor Religious Systems, pp. 3-11.)

Neither of these Brahmanical scholars shows more than a grammarian's interest in what must have been for both a cultural phenomenon outside their own religious concerns, and neither tells us anything about Vasudeva beyond the fact that he is considered to be "one to be worshipped" and not just an ordinary ksatriya. By the end of the second century BCE, however, there were more tangible signs of Vasudeva's significance for his own worshippers. The most explicit of these signs, and the earliest non-textual evidence for the Bhagavata religious tradition, is the inscription at Besnagar near Vidisa from around 113 BCE dedicating a Garuda-topped column erected in honor of "Vasudeva, the God of gods (deva-deva)" by a Greek named Heliódorus from Taxila in northwest India who describes himself not only as an ambassador from the Greek king Antialcidas to the Sunga court at Vidisa but also as a Bhagavata or devotee of Vasudeva. A somewhat later (first century BCE) inscription at Ghosundi in the Banas River/Aravalli Hills region of southern Rajasthan (Chitorgarh District) refers to a "stone enclosing wall for puja (puja-sila-prakara)" known as the "Narayana Enclosure (Narayanavatika)" for "the two Lords (bhagavan-s) Samkarsana and Vasudeva" erected by King Sarvatata, who is identified both as a

Bhagavata and as a performer of the Vedic horse-sacrifice (asvamedha). This juxtaposition of Samkarsana and Vasudeva with Vedic sacrifices appears also in an inscription from ca. 20 BCE in a cave-shrine of the northern Deccan Satavahana dynasty at a pass in the Western Ghats called Nanaghat that leads from the Deccan Plateau to the coast; the shrine contains carved portraits of several generations of the royal family from the dynastic founder Simuka to a royal widow and several current princes, with an inscription honoring the gods Dharma, Indra, Samkarsana and Vasudeva, the Moon and Sun, and the four directional deities and proclaiming the celebration of a Rajasuya (coronation) sacrifice and two asvamedha sacrifices by King Satakarni I's wife Naganika (the widow portrayed in the shrine) -- presumably during her husband's lifetime, in honor of Satakarni's establishment of his non-Aryan dynasty's power in the northwest Deccan during the interval between the post-Sunga Kanva dynasty (75-30 BCE) and the expansion of Saka rule into the region in the first century CE. (See J. N. Banerjea, The Development of Hindu Iconography, pp. 90-93; The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 191-200 and 432-440; J. M. Rosenfield, The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans, pp. 152-3.)

Vasudeva is paired in both the Ghosundi and Nanaghat inscriptions with Samkarsana, who is known in the Mahabharata and the Puranas as the elder brother of Vasudeva and a fellow prince of the Vrisnis, a branch of the Yadava tribe. The Ghosundi inscription shows clearly that these two were joint recipients of puja by royal Bhagavatas in southern Rajasthan by the first century BCE, and the

Nanaghat inscription indicates that they were considered gods alongside Indra, the Moon and Sun, and the directional deities (the lokapalas) at the end of that century even by people such as the Satavahana rulers of the northern Deccan who were in no sense Bhagavatas themselves. This deification of Vrisni heroes is further evidenced by the so-called Mora Well inscription found at a village near Mathura that records the establishment of "images of the five Vrisni heroes (vira-s) in a stone shrine "during the reign of the Saka ruler Mahaksatrapa Sodasa around 15 CE. While the names of the Vrisni heroes are not given, it is almost certain that they were the five traditional members of Vasudeva's Vrisni lineage: the brothers Samkarsana and Vasudeva, Vasudeva's sons Pradyumna and Samba, and Pradyumna's son Aniruddha. (See Banerjea, DHI, pp. 93-94, and Doris Srinivasah, "Early Krishna Icons: The Case at Mathura," in Joanna G. Williams (ed.), Kaladarsana, pp. 127-136.)

What stands out in this archaeological data is the wide variety of religious and political conditions it represents: a Greek Bhagavata at the Sunga court at Vidisa in eastern Malwa in the late second century BCE; a local ruler at Ghosundi in southern Rajasthan in the first century BCE who is both a Bhagavata and a performer of the Vedic asvamedha sacrifice; the Satavahana royal family in the northwest Deccan who invoked Samkarsana and Vasudeva along with more traditional gods in the context of proclaiming their performance of several major Vedic sacrifices; and a Saka ruler of Mathura in 15 CE who erects a stone temple (saila-devagriha) with images (pratima) of the five Vrisni heroes. It should be recognized,

moreover, that this evidence represents only the elite in each location who had the resources to record their religious activities with inscriptions that have survived for two thousand years -- almost certainly a small minority of those in each region who had similar religious beliefs without the same resources to leave permanent records of who they were and what they did. The variety of patterns represented by the few known inscriptions is likewise only a very limited sample of Indian religious life in the period from the second century BCE to the first century CE, and may not be accurately representative of what was happening at other social levels or in other regions between the end of the Mauryan Empire and the coming of the Kushans later in the first century CE.

Before we can pursue this issue further, however, we need to add another piece of data that is both very significant and at the same time hard to interpret in terms of the usual explanations of the rise of the Bhagavata tradition and the worship of Samkarsana and Vasudeva in India. The evidence in this case comes in fact not from India but from coins found at Ai-Khanum on the south bank of the Oxus River in northeastern Bactria, the center of Greek culture in the region during the period of Bactrian Greek rule in the third and second centuries BCE. (See Paul Bernard, "An Ancient Greek City in Central Asia," in Scientific American, Jan. '82, pp. 148-159.) The coins in question were issued by Agathocles, one of the last of the Greek rulers in Bactria before it fell to the combined onslaughts of the Parthians and Sakas around 125 BCE. While Agathocles' exact period of rule seems uncertain, he was in the line of kings who

followed from Euthydemus (ca. 230?-190 BCE) and his son Demetrius (190-165 BCE) and who opposed the takeover of parts of Bactria by Eucratides (171-145 BCE), and thus can be dated shortly before the middle of the second century BCE. Greek rule in Bactria proper had ended by the time of the Euthydemian king Menander (ca. 115-90 BCE) and his Eucratidian rival Antialcidas, who competed for control of the Gandharan region in northwest India, so the presence of Agathocles' coins in Ai-Khanum proves that he at least preceded these Indo-Greek rulers and thus was earlier than Heliodorus' mission to the Sunga court at Vidisa in behalf of Antialcidas around 113 BCE.

The significance of these dates comes from the appearance on one of Agathocles' coins of figures who are almost certainly Samkarsana and Vasudeva. The coin does not identify them by name, but has only the two vertical Greek words AGATHOKLES and BASILEOS flanking the central figure of Samkarsana on the obverse and a vertical Brahmi legend alongside the figure of Vasudeva on the reverse. There is thus no way of knowing whether the two figures were known as "Samkarsana" and "Vasudeva" by this Bactrian Greek ruler, but they clearly fit the defining characteristics of the two Vrisni heroes. Samkarsana as the elder brother appears on the obverse side in accord with his seniority and is identified by the uplifted plow in his left hand and club in his right hand; Vasudeva appears on the reverse and is identified by a large 8-spoked solar disc (cakra) in his left hand. Both figures are portrayed as warriors with knee-length tunics and scabbards hanging on their left hips, and

both are clearly designated as divine: each stands on a low platform, each has a device emerging from the top of his head that looks like a parasol in profile, and each has what looks like the stalk and bud of a lotus emerging from his head on each side of the stem of the "parasol" and then drooping down to hang alongside his head. The treatment of the heads of the figures is apparently unique to these coins, but otherwise the pose and the hand-held objects (plough and club) of the obverse figure fit almost exactly those of a symbol that appears on silver punch-marked coins found at Mathura from the first half of the second century BCE. The connection between these two sets of symbols from Ai-Khanum and Mathura is reinforced by the fact that silver punch-marked coins of this same type specific to Mathura appear also in the Ai-Khanum hoard in which the Agathocles coins were discovered. Whatever name the plough-and-club-holding deified warrior may have had for the Bactrian Greeks, he thus must surely have been identified with the plough-and-club-holding deified warrior who was known in the Mathura region as Samkarsana. And, although no similar line of evidence connects the cakra-holding deified warrior on Agathocles' coins to coins from Mathura, this figure on the reverse of Agathocles' coins must surely by his symbolic location on the coins have been identified with the related deified warrior known in the Mathura region as Vasudeva. (See Doris Srinivasan, "Vaisnava Art and Iconography at Mathura," in Mathura, p. 383, Plate 36. I. B-C, and Note 3, p. 390; Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, "Early Coins of Mathura Region," in Mathura, p. 127, Fig. 14.2, and Notes 12-14, p. 136; The

History and Culture of the Indian People: Vol. II. The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 103-119.)

How did the two deified Vrisni heroes find their way onto coins minted by a Greek ruler in Ai-Khanum in northern Bactria? There is certainly no conclusive answer to this on the basis of data now available. Sustained Greek contact with the northwest borders of India, of course, went back to the time of Alexander's invasion in 326/325 BCE; there were Greeks at the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra in the eastern Gangetic region; and Buddhist contacts with the region of Gandhara -- the main contact area between India and the Greek culture of Bactria -- went back at least as early as Asoka's missionary efforts and rock edicts in the region around 258 BCE. Serious cultural interaction with India other than with Buddhism, however, seems to have begun only after Bactria declared its independence from the Seleucid Empire around 250 BCE and the Parthians began their expansion into Seleucid territory west of Bactria in Iran a few years later. Separated from the Seleucid Empire now not only by choice but by the rising power of the rival Parthians, Bactria was similarly restrained from eastern expansion for several decades as long as the Mauryan Empire retained control of its northwestern frontier in the Hindu Kush. Mauryan power declined rapidly after the death of Asoka in 232 BCE, however, and the way was soon open for Bactrian advances across the Hindu Kush into the upper Indus valley.

Bactrian expansion into India was delayed for some time after Asoka's death by the need to protect the newly declared independent

kingdom from Seleucid attempts to restore control over both Bactria and Parthia. These attempts culminated in an attack on Bactria around 208 BCE by Antiochus III ("The Great," 223-187) that resulted in an indecisive two-year siege of the Bactrian capital at Bactra (Balkh) and a truce that granted the title of king to the Bactrian ruler Euthydemus and the offer of one of Antiochus' daughters in marriage to Euthydemus' son Demetrius. With Bactria neutralized but unconquered, Antiochus moved across the Hindu Kush and down the Kabul valley into the upper Indus valley, gaining submission and tribute from the local Indian ruler -- by then already independent of Mauryan control -- before he returned to Mesopotamia to deal with new crises in his western domains. Bactria was left with its independence formally confirmed, its western frontier secure for the time being from further attacks, and a new awareness of the relative weakness of Indian defense against invasion from the northwest. Antiochus' invasion, moreover, like Alexander's before him, had been at the tail end of a long campaign launched from much further to the west. Bactria was in a much better strategic position to expand its control gradually into the Kabul valley and launch campaigns into India from an established base that gave immediate access through the Khyber Pass to the upper Indus valley and the riverine plains that stretched southward and eastward from Gandhara. Once the Seleucids were safely out of the way, Euthydemus and his son Demetrius therefore turned their attention to the region beyond the Hindu Kush.

The chronology of subsequent Bactrian expansion is unclear, but by around 200 BCE Euthydemus seems to have controlled not only Bactria and the Sogdian region around Bukhara to its north (where numerous silver coins of his issue have been found) but also (from the presence of his bronze coins) two former regions of Asoka's empire: the Seistan/Arachosia region to the south around Kandahar, where Asoka had placed a rock inscription in Greek and Aramaic, and the Kabul valley, where an Asokan rock inscription in Prakrit had been carved in the Kharosthi script used in northwest India (in contrast to the Brahmi script used elsewhere in India). Well before the end of his reign around 190 BCE, Euthydemus thus seems to have established Bactrian rule over the territory that constitutes modern Afghanistan as well as the adjacent region of Central Asia, and was strategically positioned to push eastward into India to take advantage of the progressive decline in Mauryan power.

The leader of Bactria's Indian campaign was Euthydemus' son Demetrius, who had served as his father's envoy to negotiate the truce that ended the Seleucid siege of Bactra in 206 BCE and had married one of Antiochus' daughters as part of the agreement. Demetrius no doubt mainly aided his father in his early efforts to expand Bactrian control west of the Hindu Kush, but both Indian and Greek sources credit Demetrius himself for the Bactrian invasions of India that began around 200 BCE -- probably first while Demetrius commanded his father's army, and only later as the ruler of Bactria in his own right after around 190 BCE. Details of these invasions are scarce, and what is known has been passed down from

a period of confusion in India through what is little better than legend in classical Greek and Indian accounts. What is not in question is the long-term effect not only of the initial invasions credited to Demetrius but of the resulting presence in India of a Greek cultural/religious influence that lasted for centuries and helped to shape the formative stages of both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism.

Demetrius unfortunately did not have any known court reporters in the manner of Alexander to keep a record of his achievements, and Indian accounts reflect the fragmented conditions that prevailed in the final stages of Mauryan rule. The only contemporary account is apparently that of the grammarian Patañjali, who refers to Greek (Yavana) invasions during his lifetime that reached as far east as Saketa near Ayodhya and as far south as Madhyamika in southern Rajasthan near modern Chitorgarh. Other early Indian sources such as the Gargi-samhita speak of Greek assaults against the region of Pancala (modern Rohilkhand) north of the Ganges, Saketa, Mathura, and even the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra in the eastern Ganges valley. There is little doubt from these accounts, sketchy though they are, that the Bactrians under Demetrius and/or his successors penetrated deep into northern India to points beyond the Ganges-Yamuna Doab near the end of the Mauryan dynasty and -- perhaps in a separate line of invasion -- also pushed southward on the western edge of the Doab to Mathura and then southwestward to the Banas River valley in southern Rajasthan. Patañjali's placement of the Greek invasions of both Saketa and

Rajasthan during his own lifetime in the late Mauryan to early Sunga period also leaves little doubt that the Bactrian invasions were a significant factor in bringing about the final collapse of the Mauryan dynasty and furthering the successful usurpation of rule in 187 BCE by the Mauryan general Pushyamitra Sunga (187-151 BCE) -- one of whose major achievements, according to tradition, was to push back the Greek invaders from the eastern Ganges region and Madhyadesa.

Pushyamitra's success against the Bactrians gave his new Sunga dynasty control over only the central portion of the former Mauryan territories: the region from Pataliputra and Ayodhya in the east across the Ganges-Yamuna valley to Sakala/Sialkat in the Punjab, the adjacent region to the south between the Yamuna-Ganges valley and the Vindhya mountains as far west as Vidisa in eastern Malwa, and the central region of the northern Deccan known as Vidarbha. There is no evidence that the Bactrian invasion of southern Rajasthan was ever effectively countered by Pushyamitra or later Sunga rulers, and there is strong evidence that the region of Gandhara around the juncture of the Kabul and Indus rivers remained under continuous Greek control from the time of its conquest by Demetrius until it was lost to Saka invasions from Bactria near the end of the first century BCE. South of Gandhara, greek control was extended during the second century BCE into the lower Indus valley and eastward along the coast of the Arabian Sea to the Saurashtra peninsula and the coastal region north of modern Bombay near the mouths of the Narmada and Tapti rivers. It is not clear when the final stage of this Bactrian conquest was completed or by whom, but

apparently by at least the late second century BCE a port had been established at Barygaza (Broach) at the mouth of the Narmada by successors of Euthydemus, judging from coins of the Euthydemian rulers Apollodotus and Menandu reported at the site, and coastal trade was being carried out from these to both Seleucid-controlled Persian Gulf ports and to Egyptian ports on the Ptolemaic-controlled Red Sea.

Putting together the scanty evidence available (see HCIP Vol. II: The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 95-99, 101-119, and 616-620; Richard N. Frye, The History of Ancient Iran, pp. 177-204), we can discern a general outline of the political situation in India at the end of Pushyamitra Sunga's reign around the middle of the second century BCE and for at least the next half century. Demetrius' invasion had carried the Bactrians across northern India to the heartland of the Mauryan Empire in the eastern Gangetic region and had hastened the collapse of the Mauryan dynasty, but the Bactrian presence in the eastern region was relatively brief. Pushyamitra Sunga, the brahman commander of the Mauryan army, mounted an effective resistance to continuing Greek attacks perhaps even before he put an end to the last Mauryan ruler and established his own dynasty around 187 BCE, and he used his military success against the Bactrians to solidify his claim to legitimacy -- a claim that was based not only on his victories in war per se but on his performance of two asvamedhas to demonstrate his support of the Brahmanical tradition in contrast to the Buddhist-oriented Mauryan dynasty. At the height of his success, according to later traditions, he had

pushed the Bactrian forces back to the Indus River and established Sunga rule over parts of the Punjab and the lower Indus valley.

There is no objective evidence to support the latter claims for Pushyamitra's western victories, but also no reason to doubt that he achieved at least temporary success against Bactrian forces that were facing not only Pushyamitra's armies on their eastern flank but also the emergence of a rival Greek challenger in their Bactrian homeland. The Gargi-samhita, which reported the Yavana attack on Pataliputra, claims that the Yavanas/Greeks did not stay in northern India for long because of "internal dissensions" that led to "a cruel and dreadful war in their own kingdom which arose amongst themselves" (HCIP, Vol. II: The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 107). The cause of this "dissension" was no doubt Eucratides, who claimed the throne of Bactria against the Euthydemian ruler Demetrius around 170 BCE at a time when Demetrius would likely have been long absent from Bactria in the course of his Indian campaign and vulnerable to a challenge at home. It is not clear how successful Eucratides was in gaining complete control of Bactria. Demetrius died before 165 BCE, while Eucratides' reign lasted until 145 BCE when he was reportedly killed by his son Heliocles, but the presence in Ai-Khanum of coins issued by Demetrius' successor Agathocles (who was possibly also his son by his Seleucid wife) suggests that Eucratides was not able to dislodge the Euthydemian line from control of at least parts of Bactria -- although Eucratides' restriking of the coins of Apollodotus, another of Demetrius'

successors, must reflect his conquest of at least this Euthydemian ruler.

Whatever Eucratides' successes in Bactria, however, they were apparently not carried over into India and soon became irrelevant near the end of Eucratides' reign when Bactria fell to outside invaders from Parthia and Central Asia. The Parthians were led by Mithradates I (171-136 BCE), the first of the so-called "phil-Hellenistic" Parthian rulers, who attacked the western frontier of Bactria early in his reign to neutralize any threats from that direction that would distract from his goal of expanding Parthian rule westward into Seleucid territory. Parthians occupied some western portions of Bactria for some time thereafter, but were apparently content to see Bactria weakened by its internal conflicts without committing their own resources in an effort to conquer more Bactrian territory. The greatest danger to Bactria in any case, apart from its own internecine warfare, came from the invasion of Saka/Scythian tribes from Central Asia who were being forced down across the Oxus River around the middle of the second century BCE by Yüeh-chi tribes from further north and were threatening the frontiers of both Bactria and Parthia. By around 135-130 BCE, Eucratides' son Heliocles had been forced out of Bactria by the Sakas and maintained control only of the Kabul valley south of the Hindu Kush. Although other Greek rulers apparently took refuge in the Bactrian mountains and retained at least some local power down to the end of the second century BCE, effective Greek control of Bactria had ended by the last quarter of that century.

The loss of Bactria, however, did not end Greek rule in India, where now more aptly named Indo-Greek rulers remained in power in Gandhara, the Punjab, and much of the coastal region along the Arabian Sea as far south as Barygaza/Broach until they were gradually overrun and absorbed by Saka invasions from both Bactria and the Seistan/Arachosia region of eastern Iran in the course of the first century BCE. The greatest of these Indo-Greek rulers was undoubtedly Menander, famous in the Buddhist tradition from the Milinda-pañha ("The Questions of Milinda/Menander," which describes him as ruling from Sakala/Sialkot in the Punjab). Menander's dates have been much debated, but there seems to be general agreement now that his rule falls within the period from ca. 155 to 130 BCE -- i.e., during and/or after the reign of Eucratides, and at a time when Greek rule in Bactria was giving way to the combination of internal conflict and Saka invasions from the trans-Oxus region. The Greek geographer Strabo (ca. 64 BCE-24 CE) knew Menander by repute as the greatest Bactrian Greek ruler in India alongside Demetrius, and this prominence seems to be confirmed by the wide distribution of his coins in northwest India from the Kabul valley to the eastern Punjab and (according to the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea in ca. 70-80 CE) as far south as the port of Barygaza/Broach on the northern Konkan coast near the mouth of the Narmada. (Frye, op. cit., pp. 186-187; see also HCIP Vol. II, pp. 112-115).

Indo-Greek rulers continued to control Gandhara, the northern Indus valley, Saurashtra, and the northern Konkan after Menander, but none apparently held more than a portion of this territory.

Antialcidas, who sent his ambassador Heliodorus to the Sunga court at Vidisa around 113 BCE, is assumed to have ruled Gandhara at that time from the fact that Heliodorus describes himself in his Besnagar inscription as a native of the Gandharan capital of Taxila. Numerous other Indo-Greek rulers are known from coins, but little is known about their reigns or interrelationships. By the end of the second century BCE, Indo-Greek rulers were facing the threat of Saka incursions from eastern Iran, and by around 80 BCE the territory of Gandhara was under the rule of the Saka king Maues. Saka expansion into the rest of the former Indo-Greek regions continued throughout the first century BCE, and by the end of the century most of western India was controlled by various Saka rulers who adopted the titles of Kshatrapa or Mahakshatrapa. Mathura was being ruled by the Saka Mahakshatrapa Rejuvula by at least the early first century CE and by his son Mahakshatrapa Sodasa in 14-15 CE, as evidenced by the Mora Well inscription of that date which describes the shrine to the five Vrisni heroes noted earlier, and Saka rule apparently continued there down to the Kushan conquest that established Mathura as the Indian capital of the empire.

Given the sparse and scattered data available, it is impossible to draw precise boundaries for the territory controlled by either Greek or India rulers during the last two centuries BCE after the invasion by Demetrius and the response by Pushyamitra Sunga. It seems clear, however, that the Sunga dynasty (ca. 187-75 BCE) ruled the eastern Gangetic region from its centers at Pataliputra and Ayodhya, and that its rule extended westward north of the Vindhyas

as far as Vidisa in eastern Malwa in the south and the eastern Punjab in the north. The boundary in the north undoubtedly shifted with the shifting fortunes of Sunga and Greek rulers, but Indian rulers at least nominally under Sunga suzerainty seem to have controlled Madhyadesa and the region to its north as far as the Indus-Yamuna watershed throughout most of the Sunga period. Centralized control outside the eastern Gangetic region seems to have ended almost completely when the Sunga dynasty was overthrown by the Kanvas (ca. 75-30 BCE), leaving Madhyadesa in the hands of local ruling families. Some of the territory between the Doab and the Vindhya may have been retained by local Sunga rulers, perhaps under Kanva suzerainty, but the region as a whole was conquered around 30 BCE by the emerging Satavahana dynasty of the northwest Deccan, who ended the last vestiges of both Sunga and Kanva Rule.

The boundaries of Bactrian Greek and Indo-Greek rule in India are equally uncertain outside the region of Gandhara, which was under continuous Greek rule from the time of its conquest by Demetrius around 200 BCE down to its loss to the Sakas in the early first century BCE. Stable Greek rule seems never to have been established east of the Indus-Yamuna watershed, although periodic Greek raids were carried out into the northern regions of Madhyadesa, but the adjacent region of the eastern Punjab was ruled by at least Menander and perhaps by other Greek kings before or after him. The lower Indus valley seems to have been under Greek rule initially, but it was more open than other regions to incursions

from eastern Iran by the Parthians and Sakas and was lost to Saka invasions perhaps by the end of the second century BCE. The Saurashtra peninsula and the northern Konkan coast were apparently under Greek rule from early in the second century BCE and may have been part of a unified Greek kingdom under Menander in the middle of the century, but the region seems to have split into local kingdoms after Menander and was lost to the Sakas in the first century BCE.

Much of the uncertainty in this general description of Sunga and Greek rule in the second and first centuries BCE is undoubtedly due to the absence of adequate data on which to base a solid historical reconstruction. Even if we had more complete data, however, it seems likely that the political picture would remain to a large extent unclear because it often was so at the time. Neither the Sunga nor Greek territories of rule had stable boundaries, nor were the de facto boundaries of each often directly juxtaposed. Instead, there was a substantial buffer zone between them that consisted of largely independent tribal oligarchies and local/regional kingdoms that were seldom and only temporarily encompassed or controlled by the larger political systems.

A number of the tribes in this buffer zone were located in the Punjab, in the region of the upper Indus tributaries east of Gandhara that took the first impact of the Bactrian Greek invasions; others were south of the Punjab in Rajasthan, in the area bounded by the Yamuna and Chambrai valleys on the east and the Aravalli range on the west; others were in the region of Malwa west of Vidisa between the Yamuna and Narmada rivers and in the adjacent regions

of Gujarat and the Saurashtra peninsula. This roughly crescent-shaped zone around the eastern edge of the Great Indian Desert had supported a variety of tribal groups before Alexander's invasion of the northwest region in 326/25 BCE, many of which are mentioned in late Vedic texts such as the Brahmanas and Upanisads and/or in Greek accounts of Alexander's campaign in India (see History & Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I: The Vedic Age, pp. 256-267, and Vol. II: The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 47-51 and 159-168).

Alexander's first major battle in India proper, for example, was with the Indian king Porus (Paurava), who ruled a territory in the Punjab between the Jhelum and Ravi rivers associated in late Vedic texts with the Madra or Madraka tribe that had its capital at Sakala/Sialkot -- most likely Porus' capital as well, and later the capital of Menander's Indo-Greek kingdom. Beyond Porus' kingdom to the east, between the Ravi and Beas rivers, Alexander conquered several tribal republics that were no doubt the antecedents of the tribal oligarchies that emerged in the same region in the late second century BCE. Returning from the Beas, which marked his final point of conquest toward the east, Alexander reentered the kingdom of Porus and then embarked down the Jhelum to its confluence with the Chenab. There he was attacked by a confederacy of tribal republics led by the Malavas with a combined army of 90,000 foot soldiers, 10,000 horsemen, and 900 chariots, according to Greek sources, and when he had defeated them he was forced to fight and subdue still other Punjab tribes including the powerful Sibis -- a local tribe, with their capital at Sibipura near the Jhelum-Chenab juncture, that

had 40,000 foot soldiers dressed in the skins of wild animals and armed with clubs.

Whatever we may make of the details and numbers in these classical descriptions or the often inconsistent references in Vedic texts, they do convey a sense of the situation in the Punjab -- the only region reported in any detail -- as a complex mix of tribal kingdoms and tribal republics with strong warrior traditions. All of this area and its tribes were encompassed within the Mauryan Empire created by Chandragupta Maurya in the immediate aftermath of Alexander's departure, a development no doubt made much easier by Alexander's often ruthless destruction of the regional tribal armies -- and sometimes whole communities -- that resisted his assaults. Tribes remained a potential source of rebellion and disorder, however, even during the period of greatest Mauryan power from the beginning of Chandragupta's rule around 322 BCE to the death of Asoka around 232 BCE. Many earlier tribes had effectively functioned as independent states with their own armies and often their own capitals, as is evident from Alexander's conflicts with tribal warriors and fortified tribal centers from the Hindu Kush to the eastern Punjab, and the combination of republican or oligarchical leadership systems in many tribes, their warrior ethos, and their mobility made them difficult to control for any length of time in an empire extended over such a range of varied territory.

Mauryan policy seems to have been aimed at preventing disruption from tribes within the empire rather than trying to rule them directly. Carrying out this policy must have been one of the

major tasks of the Mauryan Provincial Governor in Saurashtra (Gujarat) and the Viceroy at Ujjain (southern Malwa), Vidisa (eastern Malwa) and Taxila (Gandhara), all potential problem areas with long-standing tribal populations that had historically been centers of local political power. Mauryan military supremacy provided effective control throughout the empire for over a century, supplemented after around 260 BCE by Asoka's efforts to create imperial unity with his support of Buddhism and his proclamation of rock and pillar edicts throughout his realm -- most of these edicts, except for those marking sites connected with the Buddha's life, in regions with strong local and/or tribal traditions such as newly-conquered Kalinga on the eastern coast, the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys in northern Karnataka, the Vindhya-Malwa region between the Yamuna and Narmada rivers, the Konkan coast, Saurashtra, Rajasthan, and Gandhara. The difficulty of holding these disparate regions together, however, was evident even before the end of Asoka's reign in 232 BCE, and after his death most of the southern and western territory within his domain rapidly devolved into local and regional kingdoms or tribal states.

Most of the former Mauryan territory north of the Narmada River was soon drawn into the political and cultural dynamic created by the Bactrian Greek invasions of the early second century BCE and Pushyamitra Sunga's counter-effort to retain control of Madhyadesa and Malwa for his new Brahmanically-oriented dynasty. Tribes in the buffer zone between these two contending sides became resources to be used for strategic advantage, as evidenced by the

official recognition given to the Vrisni tribal heroes Samkarsana and Vasudeva by some Greek rulers and -- in a parallel development within the same period -- the creation of the Bhagavad Gita to give Vasudeva-Krishna legitimation as a Brahmanical deity. South of the Narmada, however, Greek conquests went only as far as the northern Konkan coast on the Gulf of Cambay short of the Deccan Plateau and Sunga rule even at its height extended only into the region of Vidarbha in the northern Deccan southeast of Vidisa. The dynamic in South India was therefore very different from that in the north, and after less than a century of inclusion in the Mauryan Empire the various regions of the Deccan returned to their separate patterns of development -- a process very likely aided, rather than inhibited, by their exposure to the Mauryan administrative and military system that seems to have sat rather lightly on the south but that helped open up trade routes and resource development throughout the Deccan Plateau and along the eastern coastline between the major river systems that flowed across the Deccan into the Bay of Bengal.

A continuous sequence of cultural development can be traced in South India from the middle of the third millennium BCE onward, as discussed earlier, beginning with cattle-herding settlements in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley as early as 2500 BCE and Neolithic villages in the same region early in the second millennium BCE. Further to the north, the Malwa culture spread south across the Narmada into the northern Deccan as far as the Pravara-Godavari valley in the early second millennium BCE in the wake of the last stages of Indus cultural expansion into that region at Daimabad, and

beginning around 1600 BCE a new cultural system -- the Jorwe culture -- emerged in the Pravara-Godavari region with its own distinctive features but with evidence of influence not only from the Malwa culture that it replaced south of the Narmada but from the earlier Neolithic culture in the Krishna-Tungabhadra region.

One of the striking features of these early Deccan cultures is their strong regional orientation, each evolving within a separate river system and remaining largely within its watershed. The exception to this pattern is the enigmatic megalithic culture that appeared in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley near the end of the second millennium BCE, overlapping the older Neolithic culture in the region but representing a radical departure from the sedentary village culture with which it co-existed. Little is known about this cultural system except from the stone burial sites it left behind in a surprising variety of forms: cairn-circles, cist-circles, porthole cists, menkirs, passage chamber cists, and pit-circles in Karnataka; dolmenoid cists, cairn-circles, urn-burials and barrows, and terracotta sarcophagi within cairns or stone circles in Tamil Nadu; and cairn-circles in the Vidarbha region of present-day Madhya Pradesh. Relatively few of the megalithic sites have been carefully studied, and not enough is known about their relative chronology, chosen locations, or specific function to explain the diversity of forms. What is clear, however, is that the known sites from every region, despite the variety of forms, are all associated with the same recognizable cultural assemblage both in the graves themselves and in the small number of related habitation sites that

have so far been discovered -- an assemblage that includes as its most significant components the earliest known iron weapons, tools, and other iron artifacts known in India; a distinctive type of pottery known as Black-and-Red Ware, some of it with graffiti; a wide range of gold jewelry; and bits, cheek pieces, head ornaments, and bones of horses buried in many of the graves that indicate not only a culture that had horses but one in which both riders on horseback and their horses had a prominence deserving the special burials that mark the megalithic sites.

The known radiocarbon dates of megalithic sites and their geographical locations place the origin of this culture in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley around 1100 BCE and suggest that it spread eastward from Karnataka to the edge of the Deccan Plateau and the lower Krishna valley in Andhra Pradesh and then -- by around 700/600 BCE -- along the fringe of the highlands to the Godavari valley and Vidarbha in the north and to Tamil Nadu in the south. At the lower end of the chronology, archaeological evidence of later cultural contacts indicates a continuation of the megalithic culture in all of these regions down to at least the time of the Mauryan Empire and Asoka's Deccan inscriptions. There is little doubt that the bearers of this culture were dominant wherever they went, as evidenced by their continuing construction of stone burial monuments throughout the southern and eastern Deccan some eight centuries after their first megalithic tombs in Karnataka and three or four centuries after their expansion into the lower Krishna valley, Vidarbha, and Tamil Nadu. The problem is to understand the origins

and inner dynamic of their megalithic culture, their relationship to the earlier village cultures in the Deccan, and their role in the cultural development of South India during the period of nearly a thousand years between the end of the second millennium BCE and the closing centuries of the first millennium BCE -- a period in which their megalithic culture was the most prominent cultural system in the Deccan at least in terms of its artifacts and archaeological remains.

None of these problematical issues can be resolved on the basis of present evidence. There are intriguing parallels between the Deccan megalithic burials and the megalithic tombs at Sialk in Iran on the western rim of the central desert southeast of present-day Qom, but the Sialk megalithic tombs date from about the same time as the early megalithic sites in Karnataka and there is no easy way to account for an almost concurrent appearance of the same cultural pattern at sites more than 2000 miles apart and with no known contemporary megalithic sites between them. One can imagine a scenario in which iron-using megalith-building pastoral nomads migrated southeastward from Sialk to Baluchistan between the desert to their east and the mountains of the Esfahan and Kerman regions to their west, responding perhaps to forces set in motion by Assyrian expansion into northwestern Iran late in the second millennium BCE. It is much harder to imagine a further migration across the lower Indus valley into Gujarat and the Deccan Plateau and then on south to the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley, there to recreate the megalithic culture of Sialk -- without having left any

evidence of this culture along the way. Such a migration is not impossible geographically, although the apparent near-simultaneity of the Sialk and southern Deccan cultures makes it highly unlikely as a large-scale movement of people. There might with greater likelihood have been some remote contact or influence between Sialk and the southern Deccan, but again there is no evidence beyond the fact that iron and megalithic burials appear in both locales. On the whole, it seems better to seek the primary source of the Deccan megalith culture closer to its point of origin.

Fortunately, there are clues to the source of the megalithic culture of Karnataka in the archaeological data from the earlier Neolithic culture there and from Jorwe Culture sites north of the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley, although archaeologists themselves seem not to have made the connection. The first of these clues is timing. The Jorwe Culture began around 1600/1500 BCE on the foundation of the Malwa Culture in the region between the Narmada and Bhima rivers -- the latter, the northernmost tributary of the Krishna River, originating only a few miles south of the Pravara-Godavari river on which the type-site village of Jorwe and the earlier Indus/Malwa village of Daimabad are located. The Jorwe Culture flourished until around 1100/1000 BCE at sites such as Navdatoli on the Narmada, Prakash on the Tapti, Nasik on the upper Godavari, Jorwe, Daimabad, and Nevasa on the Pravara-Godavari tributary, and Chandoli and Inamgaon on the Ghod tributary of the Bhima, but after 1100/1000 BCE many of these sites were abandoned and those that remained active such as Inamgaon show

evidence of cultural decline in terms of the coarser quality of pottery, a shift from large rectangular houses to smaller rounded huts, and a general absence of the signs of prosperity that marked the earlier phase.

The other half of the chronological clue is found in the Neolithic culture of the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley, a culture that represents a continuum with the early cattle-herding culture in the region at sites such as Utnur that date back to the middle and late third millennium BCE. A flourishing Neolithic culture had developed in this region by the early second millennium at sites such as Tekkalakota, Hallur, Maski, and Brahmagiri, all in a characteristic east-central Deccan countryside of granite outcrops and huge granite boulders that reflect its ancient Pre-Cambrian geological origins. The region from these sites southward is rich in mineral resources, most relevantly copper, gold, and iron ore, but the Neolithic villagers -- whether from lack of technology or absence of need -- made little use of the available metals except for occasional gold ornaments and small items of copper and relied throughout the lifetime of their culture on a basic tool kit of stone axes, adzes, and blades along with tools of bone and shell. Contact with the chalcolithic Jorwe culture to the north is evident in mutual borrowing of pottery types during the latter half of the second millennium BCE, but the basic Neolithic culture remained essentially intact in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley down to its replacement at the former Neolithic sites by the newly-emerged iron-using megalithic culture around 1100/1000 BCE -- almost exactly the

same time as the end of most of the Jorwe culture sites further north. The timing of this parallel change in two closely juxtaposed cultural systems with known prior contacts can hardly be coincidental, but must be a clue to their involvement in a process that brought about their common demise and/or transformation into something new that absorbed them both.

A further clue that makes their common relation to the megalithic culture more likely is the similarity of burial practices in the Jorwe and Neolithic cultures. Both cultures seem to have given special attention to their treatment of the dead, and they seem to have followed very similar practices throughout their cultures' centuries of separate existence. Both buried their dead in a north-south direction in grave-pits beneath the earthen floors of their dwellings with their heads facing north, adults typically in an extended position and children in two urns placed horizontally mouth-to-mouth. Some adults at Neolithic sites in Karnataka were buried in multiple urns to enclose their longer bodies, including one female who had seven pots placed at her feet. The adult dead were provided with food and drink in both cultures, as evidenced by bowls and the characteristic Jorwe spouted pots in Jorwe graves and by bowls, dishes, and other vessels in a distinctive red-and-black ware in the contemporary Neolithic graves in Karnataka.

The presence of black-and-red ware as the distinguishing pottery type in megalithic burials throughout the Deccan is clear evidence of at least one important continuity between the Neolithic culture of Karnataka and the megalithic culture that appeared

alongside it in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley around 1100/1000 BCE. There are, moreover, likely continuities in the form of the megalithic burials themselves, which in the earliest sites in Karnataka were predominantly cairn-circles, cist-circles, and pit-circles distinguished by the circle of granite boulders surrounding the central cairn, cist, or pit in which the burial remains were placed. The Neolithic burials in Karnataka, by apparent contrast, were inside houses rather than in separate tombs, but it was the practice at some of the sites to use readily available local granite boulders to mark the boundaries of the circular village huts and sometimes to seal the burial pits inside. A transition from boulder-ringed huts that combined habitation and burial to boulder-ringed pits, cists, or cairns for burial only would thus not have required a major revolution either in form or in the black-and-red ware grave deposits, but instead only a change -- also revolutionary in its own way, but without a fundamental loss of continuity -- from burials in the floors of permanent Neolithic habitations to permanent megalithic burial structures without a habitation function.

What remained constant in this transition was the attention given to permanent places for the dead when the Neolithic pattern of village settlement ended. The consistent evidence from megalithic burials, especially the presence of bits, harness ornaments, and horse bones as well as the distribution of the sites themselves and the relatively few associated signs of habitation, all reflect a nomadic way of life that would not have provided permanent habitation structures suitable for burials. The megalithic tombs

thus seem to be a logical substitution to meet the need for permanent and secure places for the dead, most likely related to the need to maintain family and ancestral continuity in the context of a migratory existence.

If there is continuity in the attention given to the dead, however, including the continuing use of the earlier Neolithic black-and-red ware in megalithic burials, there are also obvious discontinuities in the abandonment of Neolithic village sites soon after the beginning of the megalithic culture and in the concurrent appearance of iron artifacts such as weapons, tools, and horse equipment in the megalithic burials. The evolution of pastoral nomadism out of a settled village culture would not in itself have been unusual, especially for a village culture like this one that had evolved from an initial regional pastoral tradition at sites such as Utnur, Maski, and Piklihal and remained a cattle-herding economy even after village settlement, but there was no corresponding foundation for the extensive use of iron that marked the beginning of the megalithic culture. Villages in this southern region had remained at the Neolithic level throughout the second millennium, in contrast to the Chalcolithic Malwa and Jorwe cultures further north; their basic tool-kit was produced from stone, and the few items made from locally available copper and gold were mainly decorative. There were rich deposits of iron ore in the region, but there is no evidence that the Neolithic culture had either the interest or the technological know-how to explore the potential of this local resource.

Despite the continuities between the Neolithic culture of the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley and its megalithic successor culture, it is thus unlikely that the latter could have evolved directly from the former with regard especially to the use of iron. Some other influences or cultures must have been involved in this process to introduce a level of technology unavailable in the Neolithic villages -- a technology not necessarily already applied to iron, but one that would make the discovery, extraction, and use of iron possible. The most obvious candidate for this role is the neighboring Jorwe Culture just one river system away to the north: a culture that not only had the necessary technology for processing metal ores, but one whose villages were either abandoned or declining at the same time that the megalithic culture appeared near the end of the second millennium BCE.

There is evidence of interaction between the Jorwe Culture and the older Neolithic culture to its south well before this point of apparent convergence. At Theun, a site about 25 miles north of Inamgaon and roughly midway between Inamgaon and the village of Jorwe, chalcolithic villagers lived in circular huts surrounded by one or two circles of stone boulders in the pattern of southern Neolithic villages and used a variety of red-and-black pottery; at nearby Sastevadi, handmade ware of the Neolithic type from Karnataka was found at an early Malwa Culture level, succeeded by the typical Jorwe Ware. It appears from these sites that some Neolithic villagers from the southern region had settled in the hilly country just south of the Pravara-Godavari valley even before the post-

Malwa Jorwe period, and that their villages had subsequently been absorbed into the chalcolithic culture of the region around them. Apart from these early interregional settlements, it seems likely on a more general level that some of the Jorwe pottery forms such as necked vases and the distinctive Jorwe spouted pots were based on handmade Neolithic pottery types that preceded the black-and-red ware at village sites in Karnataka (Agrawala, The Archaeology of India, p. 111).

Data of this sort suggest both early and continuing contacts between the southern Neolithic culture and the Jorwe culture area during the second millennium BCE, but tell us little about the depth and nature of these contacts or their effects on either the Jorwe or the Neolithic cultures in the centuries before the megalithic culture emerged around 1100/1000 BCE. What is clear in any case is that these cultures, whatever their degree of contact or influence, maintained their own separate identities during this period. The Neolithic culture seems to have changed very little, and even after contact with the chalcolithic cultures to the north -- to which it may have supplied metal ores or access to metal ores -- it continued to rely primarily on stone tools. The Jorwe culture remained, as it began, essentially a regional successor to the earlier Malwa culture, and although it may have borrowed some pottery types from the Neolithic culture and made use of the mineral resources of the southern region, it seems to have been influenced very little in any direct way by its contact with what must have been from its perspective a less developed cultural tradition.

But if neither culture changed its basic identity, the Jorwe Culture as the more advanced of the two continued to develop internally during these centuries and must have provided the major dynamic for change that preceded the megalithic culture. One of the traditions that the two cultures had in common was the practice of burying their dead beneath the floors of their habitations, adults extended in a north-south direction and children in multiple urns. Near the end of the pre-megalithic period at the Jorwe site of Inamgaon, however, one of the largest houses near the center of the village contained the skeleton of a six-foot-tall man buried in a seated embryonic position in a four-legged unbaked urn that was modeled after a female abdomen, with an accompanying spouted pot on which a boat was painted; another four-legged urn had funerary jars and a bowl but no skeleton, as if the body had not been recovered; and in the same area was found an oval clay receptacle containing a terracotta female figurine, with another female figurine and a bull figurine on top of the receptacle. The location and size of the house, the distinctive features of the burials, and the presence in the central part of the village of a large (ca. 30' x 34') granary with pit-silos and platforms for storage bins, all point to the emergence of an elite class of rulers or chieftains and a growing stratification of the society. This impression is reinforced by the concentration of craftsmen -- potters, ivory carvers, goldsmiths, and lime-makers -- in much humbler quarters within one area on the western edge of the village, in much the same arrangement as that in villages in the region even today.

By the end of the second millennium BCE, it is thus evident that a strong regional village tradition had taken root in the Jorwe area and that at least some villages such as Inamgaon had achieved a significant level of prosperity, social stratification, and economic specialization by successfully exploiting the resources of the region. Animal bones indicate that the local domesticated animals included not only the more common cattle, goats, pigs, and dogs but also horses and elephants, and camel bones also were found -- though it is unclear whether they were from wild or domesticated camels. Given these resources, it seems certain that the Jorwe Culture must have dominated the northern Deccan and very likely had trade contacts beyond it not only with the Neolithic culture to its south -- where the evidence of contact is clear -- but also to the north and perhaps into western India, where camels (if in fact they were being used as beasts of burden) would have been a major asset.

With its increasing prosperity and resources in the latter half of the second millennium, the Jorwe Culture would seem to have been ideally suited for a major role in the first millennium alongside the Painted Grey Ware and Eastern Gangetic cultures in the Ganges-Yamuna valley. Instead of moving toward urbanization and further political/economic development, however, the Jorwe Culture as measured by its existing village sites entered a period of decline after ca. 1100 BCE that left most of the villages abandoned and others at a greatly reduced level of prosperity and cultural sophistication.

Some scholars have suggested that the Jorwe region may have experienced a prolonged drought at this time as a result of changes in the monsoon rains that make agriculture possible on the dry plateau of the northwest Deccan in the rain shadow of the Western Ghats. More likely, perhaps, as an alternative or concurrent cause of the Jorwe Culture's decline, is the absence of any significant mineral resources in the Jorwe settlement area, which was within the geological region known as the Deccan Trap -- a region of ancient lava flows that has no accessible iron or gold deposits and only a limited supply of copper ore.

Metallurgical technology was relatively advanced in the Jorwe Culture despite the scarcity of local metals. There is evidence of both copper smelting and gold working at the Jorwe site of Inamgaon, and copper axes, chisels, and knives were in use there in addition to an extensive range of stone tools. The copper may have come from a source on the Bhima River only some forty miles to the southeast downstream from Inamgaon. The gold, however, must have come from the main Indian source of gold ore, the Kolar region in southeastern Karnataka, which was much further south beyond the Neolithic sites in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley. There is thus evidence that the Jorwe Culture was reaching out beyond the Deccan Trap by trade or exploration to supplement the limited local metal resources before the end of the major Jorwe sites around 1100 BCE, and that at least one of its long-range sources was the gold-rich region south of the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley.

It is not at all clear what role the Neolithic culture in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley may have had in this process. Evidence from related pottery types indicates some degree of contact between the Jorwe and Neolithic cultures (above, p. 142), and both gold ornaments and small copper items have been found at Neolithic sites. There is no evidence, however, that the gold and copper artifacts were produced by the Neolithic culture, and no indication that this culture shared the Jorwe Culture's technical knowledge of ore smelting and metal working. The Neolithic culture is thus unlikely to have been a source of refined metal, but seems rather to have been at most an intermediary participant in trading mineral resources that were not being directly exploited by the stone-using culture itself.

The persistence of Neolithic tool traditions in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley was somewhat anachronistic in light of the advanced metallurgical technology of the Jorwe Culture on its northern frontier, although the conservatism is understandable in the context of a landscape characterized by granite outcrops and massive boulders that made stone the most readily available material. Change was inevitable, however, given the developments in metallurgy elsewhere, because the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley not only gave access to the gold-rich region to its south but was itself a region rich in both copper and iron ore. Once this was discovered, and appropriate techniques of smelting were applied to the region's mineral resources, the region went through the abrupt

transition from Neolithic to Iron-Age culture that marks the beginning of the Megalithic period.

We do not know for certain who was responsible for this dramatic change, but the impetus must have come from outside the Neolithic culture. Studies of early iron smelting point to two preconditions that typically prepare the way for a transition to iron production: experience in smelting more easily refined metals, especially copper, and the presence of controlled-atmosphere kilns -- including pottery kilns (Chapurukha Makokha Kusimba, The Ethnography of Ironworking and Forging on the Swahili Coast; unpublished research report for the Department of Archaeology, Mombasa, Kenya, 1993, pp. 1-11). Neither of these conditions was present in the Neolithic culture, but the Jorwe site at Inamgaon had both a kiln to smelt copper and a controlled-atmospheric kiln for pottery (Agrawala, The Archaeology of India, p. 238). The Jorwe Culture thus had the appropriate technology for the preconditions of iron smelting, was the nearest known culture to the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley that had this level of technology, and was in known contact with the Neolithic settlers of the region -- all strong indications that the Jorwe Culture was the likely agent in the next stage of developing the smelting and use of iron.

None of this, of course, is proof that the Jorwe Culture made the critical next step to iron production. Iron is a much more difficult metal than copper to refine from metallic ores (Kusimba, ibid.), because it is more chemically active and forms strongly-bonded oxides that must be refined in an oxygen-deficient (reducing)

atmosphere to produce pure molten iron. The minimum temperature at which this transformation occurs, moreover, is 1100° C, the temperature required to maintain a molten slag throughout the course of the reduction process. This special combination of conditions made the production of iron relatively late compared to other common metals, as witness the lag of nearly 3,000 years between the early production of copper weapons and implements in Egypt and the first significant iron production in the Middle East in the early second millennium BCE, and it was not until the late second millennium that the techniques of iron production were diffused into other regions -- and even then sporadically, because the technology required skilled practitioners who typically kept their essential knowledge confined to a small community of specialists.

The appearance of iron artifacts in the first Deccan megalithic sites around 1100 BCE fits into this chronology as not only the earliest appearance of fabricated iron in India but as one of the earliest examples of iron use outside the Middle East, roughly parallel chronologically with the iron found in megalithic burials at Sialk in north central Iran. Given this chronology, it is theoretically possible that the development of iron smelting in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley could have been initiated by immigrants from Iran, either groups of horse-riding pastoralists of the sort who buried their dead at Sialk or perhaps only independent specialists in iron metallurgy. As noted earlier, however, it is hard to imagine how or why such immigrants would have ended up in the southern

Deccan when both pastoral lands and iron ore were available much closer to Iran in western India. Contacts over such a distance seem in any case unlikely in the absence of intervening evidence of megalithic burials or iron artifacts, and it seems unnecessary to assume Iranian or other remote influences when the preconditions for iron production were present in the much closer and already interrelated Jorwe Culture.

The trademark of the Jorwe Culture was its fine-grained and thin-walled red or orange pottery, turned on a fast wheel in a variety of characteristic forms and then baked at a high temperature to produce vessels that often give an almost metallic ring. Clay begins to take on ceramic qualities at firing temperatures around 500° C, but the hard-fired characteristics found in Jorwe Ware require kilns that can achieve much higher temperatures under controlled conditions. The fact that some of the Jorwe pottery was vitrified (i.e., changed into glass as a result of over-firing) indicates that the kind of well-designed kiln found at Inamgaon could produce temperatures of at least 1200° C, the lowest point at which vitrification occurs, and thus was capable of temperatures above the 1100° C required for refining iron ore.

Producing refined molten iron, however, requires more than just temperature; it requires a reducing atmosphere -- typically carbon monoxide (CO) -- that can free the metallic iron from the oxide and sulphide compounds that make up the usual iron ores. This is the opposite of the oxygen conditions for firing the Jorwe Ware, which acquired its reddish color from the oxidizing of iron in the

clay when vessels were fired in a kiln with air ducts to maintain a high oxygen level. The Jorwe culture also produced a grey ware, however, as did the southern Neolithic culture, both of which were the result of firing in an atmosphere with less oxygen, and the Neolithic culture's characteristic black-and-red ware was the product of firing under conditions that resulted in an oxidized red lower portion and a black deoxidized (reduced) upper portion -- presumably from the upper portion being inverted and/or covered during firing. Potters were thus familiar with techniques to produce high kiln temperatures and different atmospheres, and were aware that different degrees of oxygen (however they thought of this) had different effects on materials being fired. Metal workers, though no doubt a separate group of craftsmen within the Jorwe community, were not only specialists in heating and forming gold and copper but had long experience in the smelting of copper ores to extract metallic copper, and could hardly have been unaware of the kiln-firing technology of their neighboring potters.

Given this background, which represents the classic set of preconditions for iron production, it is not hard to imagine that metal workers in the Jorwe Culture, in contact and trade with the iron-rich Krishna-Tungabhadra valley, could have discovered how to refine iron ore under the necessary conditions of high temperature and a reducing atmosphere -- perhaps in the context of smelting copper, or as an accidental byproduct of firing pottery either in the Jorwe Culture or in the Neolithic culture where strongly reducing atmospheres were part of the conditions for producing the black-

and-red pottery that marked both the Neolithic village sites and the later megalithic burials. It is even possible, though geographically less probable, that knowledge of iron-smelting techniques was imported from Iran. Without further evidence, it is no doubt pointless to speculate on how exactly the knowledge of iron production appeared in the southern Deccan when it did, around 1100 BCE. The important point is that once it did appear, the Jorwe Culture was in a unique situation to exploit this knowledge on a foundation of well-established skills in kiln firing, smelting, and metal working.

However this discovery occurred, moreover, it is a fact that the Jorwe sites within the region of the Deccan Trap declined or were abandoned around 1100 BCE and that the iron-using megalithic culture appeared in the Krishna-Tungabhadra valley at almost exactly the same time. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Jorwe Culture -- or at least its elite horse-riding pastoral warriors and craftsmen -- moved south from the mineral-poor northwestern Deccan at this time to the mineral-rich region previously inhabited only by a population of Neolithic farmers and herders, and that this move gave rise to the megalithic culture that appears at that point at the former Neolithic sites. It is possible that a drought or some other crisis in agricultural production may have furthered this move, but the result was not a shift of settled village cultivators from one region to another but instead a transformation in the way of life of the dominant culture from settled agriculture to a form of pastoral nomadism that was centered around horse-riding warriors whose

chiefs were buried in megalithic tombs along with their horses, their iron weapons and horse equipment, their gold ornaments, and vessels of black-and-red ware.

The presence of black-and-red ware in the megalithic tombs, as noted earlier, is a clear indication of continuity with the southern Neolithic tradition. The megalithic tombs also, as we have seen, can be understood as a continuation of the practice in both the Neolithic and Jorwe cultures of burying the dead beneath the floors of habitations -- although the "habitations" now were habitations of the dead only. Even as -- or perhaps more accurately especially as -- the habitations of the dead, however, these tombs seem to mark the permanent centers of the otherwise nomadic pastoral tribes who constructed them, most likely as the ancestral tombs of tribal chiefs who gave the tradition its continuity and coherence. This continuity and coherence, moreover, was for nearly a thousand years directly connected not only with the tombs themselves and the tradition of horse-riding warriors and tribal chiefs, but with the iron artifacts that appear in the tombs from their inception, because the location of the major megalithic sites corresponds almost exactly with the regions of the southern, eastern, and northeastern Deccan that contain the richest deposits of iron ore.

The close connection of the megalithic culture with iron most likely explains the otherwise puzzling absence of megalithic sites in the former Jorwe region. If Jorwe people were instrumental in the creation of the megalithic culture, as is argued above, one would expect logically to find megalithic tombs in their former homeland.

That homeland, however, if the previous discussion is valid, was vacated by the creators of the megalithic culture mainly because it lacked essential mineral resources, especially iron, in favor of a region -- eventually several regions -- where both iron ore and copper were found in abundance. It is only much later, in the aftermath of the Mauryan Empire and the creation of an interlocking trade network throughout the Deccan, that we find the apparent appearance of megalithic horse-riding warriors in the former Jorwe region -- but then not as migratory pastoralists but rather as the creators of new settled tribal states.

The history of the former Jorwe region of the Deccan south of the Narmada is obscure from around 1100 BCE during the so-called Late Jorwe period and afterwards down to the time of the Mauryan conquest. The region was outside the area of Aryan contact and awareness, and the Vedic/Puranic genealogies and "histories" -- mainly Brahmanical constructs from a later time out of largely legendary materials -- associate the region with the vaguely defined peoples, tribes, or dynasties known as the Bhojas and Haihayas, who are said to have ruled at different times and places within the area between the Aravalli Hills in Rajasthan and the northern Deccan south of Malwa and the Narmada River.

According to the standard Puranic genealogies, both the Bhojas and the Avantis of Malwa were branches of the Haihayas, who in turn were descended along with the main branch of the Yadavas from their common ancestor Yadu -- a genealogy that makes the Haihayas, Bhojas, and Avantis related to such mainstream Yadava descendants

as the Chedis and Valdarbhas, the Satvatas, and the Vrisnis. Puranic histories credit the Haihaya king Mahismant with the founding of Mahismati on the northern bank of the Narmada (across from the Malwa/Jorwe site of Navdatoli), and identify this city also with the later Haihaya ruler Kartavirya (also known as Arjuna or Sahasrarjuna), whose conflict with the Bhargava Brahman Parasurama, the son of the sage Jamadagni and his wife Renuka, formed the basis for the Puranic story of Parasurama's destruction of the ksatriyas (starting with Kartavirya and then the rest of the Haihayas) as one of Visnu's early human avatars. While such genealogies and histories clearly cannot be taken as factual accounts, they do indicate that the Brahmanical genealogists/historians perceived -- or assigned -- a loose-knit set of familial relationships between the various peoples classified as Yadavas, and thus must have seen a broadly defined common origin of some of the historical kingdoms known to have been founded by the middle of the first millennium BCE: Chedi, south of Kausambi between the Ken and Son rivers; Vidarbha, south of Chedi and the upper Narmada valley in the north-central Deccan region around modern Nagpur; and Avanti in Malwa, whose capitals at Ujjain and Mahismati locate it geographically and provide at least one point of contact with the Puranic histories' discussion of the Haihaya founding of Mahismati.

Except for Vidarbha, which emerged as a rebellious province during the post-Mauryan rule of Pusyamitra Sunga, the Brahmanical chronicles apparently had little awareness of developments in the

Deccan south of the Narmada valley for most of the first millennium BCE. Mahismati and the lower Narmada River seem to have marked the limit of geographical knowledge in the direction of the western Deccan, and the association of the Haihayas and Bhojas with the region further south has more the quality of ancient legend than of history. Early Buddhist texts, however, reflect a more direct knowledge of the Deccan, no doubt because Buddhist monks from the fifth century BCE onward expanded along the trade routes that linked Magadha and the northern and western Deccan through sites such as Kausambi, Bharhut, Sanci/Vidisa, Ujjain, and Mahismati at least as far as Pratisthana (modern Paithan) on the Godavari River about 80 miles downstream from the earlier village sites of Jorwe and Daimabad.

The appearance of Pratisthana in Buddhist texts brings the Jorwe region for the first time into the realm of history instead of archaeology. Both the Pali Scriptures and early Jain texts identify a number of "Great States" (Mahajanapadas) that existed at the time of the Buddha and Mahavira, and both include among them the state of Assaka with its capital at Potana or Potali. According to some Buddhist texts, Assaka was one of two states along the Godavari River: Mulaka or Alaka on the northern side, with its capital at Potana/Potoli (i.e., Pratisthana), and Assaka immediately to its south. A Buddhist commentary on the Pali Sutta-Nipata adds the further information that Assaka and Mulaka were two Andhaka or Andhra territories, and a Brahman commentator on Kautilya's Arthasastra identifies Assaka -- there given the Sanskrit name

Asmaka -- as Maharashtra. (History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 1-3 and 12-13) The Puranic histories contribute to this the legend that Pratisthana (there called Paudanya) was founded by Asmaka, a prince from the Ikshvaku (Solar) dynasty of Ayodhya, who was born to his father Mitrasaha's queen Madayanti as a result of her levirate marriage to Mitrasaha's priest Vasistha, and they add the further detail that Asmaka had a son named Mulaka who came to be called Narikavaca ("one who has women as armor") because he sought protection among women as a result of his fear of Parasurama's destruction of ksatriyas (HCIP, Vol. I, The Vedic Age, p. 283).

The most important historical fact that we can extract from this evidence is the existence of Pratisthana as a regional political center in the northern Deccan by probably early in the second half of the first millennium BCE. The location of this center on the upper Godavari River places it on the eastern edge of the nuclear sites of the earlier Jorwe Culture (Nasik, about 100 miles upstream on the Godavari; Jorwe and Daimabad, about 80 miles west on the Pravara tributary of the Godavari; and Inamgaon, about 80 miles southwest on the Ghod tributary of the Bhima River), and there can be little doubt that it represents in some way a continuity with the Malwa and Jorwe cultures that dominated the region from around 1600 to 1100 BCE. By Mauryan times, Pratisthana had become the major southern terminus of the trade route southward from Ujjain in Malwa through Mahismati and Ajanta that linked the Deccan with Rajasthan and Mathura to the north and with Vidisa, Kausambi,

Varanasi (Benares), and the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra to the east. This network of regional centers remained under Mauryan control through at least the reign of Asoka (ca. 269-232 BCE), but the decline of Maurya power after Asoka and the Bactrian Greek invasions in the early second century BCE led to a division of North India into Greek and Sunga spheres of rule with a zone of tribal and regional kingdoms between them and beyond them to the south. Initially within the Sunga domain and then apparently claimed by the successor Kanva dynasty (ca. 75-30 BCE), Pratisthana emerged finally near the end of the first century BCE as the capital of the Deccan-based Satavahana dynasty that overthrew the Kanvas and controlled the northern Deccan -- and at times the neighboring Malwa region -- until the beginning of the third century CE.

The connection between this historically-known Pratisthana and the earlier cultures of the region would seem to be through the state of Assaka, identified in Jain and Buddhist texts as one of the Mahajanapadas by the time of Mahavira and the Buddha -- i.e., by around 500 BCE. The origin of this state is not discussed in these earliest sources, but they typically give states the names of the peoples or tribes who settled there and we may assume that they follow the same practice in the case of Assaka. This is indirectly confirmed by the legend of Asmaka's founding of Paudanya/Pratisthana in the Puranas, which typically represent peoples or tribes as individuals -- usually kings or princes -- in their genealogical history of the Solar and Lunar dynasties. Since the Pali word "Assaka" is the same as the Sanskrit word "Asmaka"

(and also the Sanskrit "Asvaka", which appears as an equivalent in some sources), we may assume from the combined evidence of the Buddhist, Jain, and Puranic sources that Pratisthana and the related state of that name in or just south of the upper Godavari valley were settled by a people or tribe known as Assaka/Asmaka/Asvaka some time before the middle of the first millennium BCE.

This is not the only appearance of the name Asvaka/Asmaka in early sources. Panini lists two tribal republics (Samghas or Ganas) in northwest India, Asvayana and Asvakayana, that apparently correspond to the Aspasioi and Assakenoi tribes described in Greek reports as fierce opponents of Alexander in the mountainous Kunar and Panjkora-Swat valleys north of the Khyber Pass. There is no historical evidence to connect these tribes of the northwest mountain valleys with the Assaka/Asmaka/Asvaka of the northern Deccan, but their names and other cultural features suggest a commonality that may help our understanding of the less clearly defined Deccan tribes. The names are especially revealing, because Panini's Asvayana and Asvakayana, the Greek equivalents Aspasioi and Assakenoi, the Pali Assaka, and the Puranic Asvaka all have names derived from the words for "horse" in either Sanskrit (asva) or Persian (aspa). Whatever else they may have in common, all of these tribes thus had the name "horse people" as their primary identity.

This connection with horses is most conclusively evidenced in the Greek accounts of Alexander's battles with the Assakenoi in the Panjkora-Swat valley on the eastern edge of the Hindu Kush.

According to these accounts, the Assakenoi opposed Alexander with an army of 30,000 cavalry, 38,000 infantry, and 30 elephants and were subdued only after a prolonged conflict in which Alexander himself was wounded in an attempt to scale the wall of the Assakenoi's citadel at Massaga (Sanskrit Masakavati). A cavalry force on this scale clearly could only have been mustered by a tribe with a substantial supply of horses, so it appears that the Assakenoi's name was well deserved. There is no corresponding evidence for horses in Greek accounts of the Aspasioi, the other "horse people" of the region, but Alexander is said to have captured 40,000 prisoners and 230,000 cattle when he defeated this tribe. The numbers of cattle and horses in the combined record of these neighboring tribes almost certainly indicate a pastoral way of life centered around the use of horses for herding and mounted warfare, and archaeological evidence suggests that this pattern may have begun as far back as the early first millennium BCE with the introduction of iron and horses into the region. (See The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 45-46 for the Greek accounts and S. P. Gupta, Archaeology of Soviet Central Asia, and The Indian Borderlands, pp. 206-217 for the archaeological data.)

Most of what is known about the Swat-Panjkora region before Alexander comes from the numerous burial sites of what archaeologists have called the "Gandhara Grave Culture" or the "Swat Valley Culture", which can be traced through several stages from the middle of the second millennium BCE down to the fourth century BCE.

The graves from the beginning consisted mainly of adult burials in pits lined with courses of stones in the floors of larger upper pits, with the lower pits containing the actual graves finally sealed with broken stone slabs, the upper pit filled with loose dirt, and the grave-site marked with a circle of stones. In the case of child burials, there were no upper pits but only single grave-pits lined with stone slabs and sealed with piled up stones, with no stone circles. The graves themselves changed very little over time, but the disposition of bodies changed from primarily post-cremation burials in terracotta box-urns to post-cremation burials in "visage urns" with painted faces during the second millennium BCE, with a smaller number of inhumation burials throughout this period and a variety of copper objects and unpainted pottery vessels in the graves of both types of burials. Early in the first millennium BCE, however, the pattern of burial changed almost entirely to post-exposure secondary burials, often with the bones of several people collected over time in a single grave, and along with this change there were also new grave-goods: a variety of animal and human terracotta figurines; jewelry of terracotta, ivory, gold, silver, shell, and glass; and various iron objects including arrowheads, spearheads, and cheek-bars for horse harnesses -- the latter with exact parallels in Central Asia.

It is clear that the "Swat Valley Culture" went through major changes in the early first millennium, as reflected most directly in the shift to secondary burials, the appearance of iron artifacts, and evidence for the use of horses, but it is difficult to determine

whether these changes were the result of internal developments or external contacts. The equipment for horseback riding and the shift to secondary burials suggest either influence or an influx of new people from Central Asia, yet the continuing and apparently unbroken use of the same grave-sites and types of graves for secondary burials as were earlier used for inhumations or post-cremation urn burials suggests a continuation of the same cultural community in the region. If there is no way at present to resolve this question of origin, however, it seems almost certain that the horse-riding warriors whom the Greeks knew as Assakenoi some six centuries later were the inheritors of the transformed Swat Valley Culture of the early first millennium when horses, iron weapons, and a pastoral-nomadic pattern of secondary burials appeared in the region. And if this is so, then it may tell us something about the other "horse-people" of the same period, the Assakas/Asvakas/Asmakas of the northern Deccan.

There is no doubt that Indian sources were somewhat confused about the different tribes that they labeled "horse people". Panini lists the Asvakas along with other tribal republics in northwest India such as the Malavas and Sibis, and apparently knows nothing of Asvakas elsewhere, while the Assakas reported in Buddhist and Jain texts are clearly located near the Godavari valley in the northern Deccan. The Markandeya Purana, however, places the Asmakas in the northwest, while the rest of the Puranic tradition locates them in the Deccan with the genealogical legend of Asmaka's founding of Paudanya/Pratisthana. This Puranic confusion seems to be reflected

also in the genealogical account of Asmaka's son Mulaka, who came to be called Narikavaca ("one whose armor is women") because he sought protection among women. While this may represent an independent tradition about the Deccan Mulakas, it has a striking similarity to Greek reports that the Assakenoi were led into battle against Alexander by queen Cleophes, mother of the late king, and that Assakenoi women joined their men in fighting the Greek invaders. Brahmans would certainly have seen the use of female warriors as a cultural flaw, although what they knew about this practice was probably not as specific as the Greek accounts but rather something more vaguely and disparagingly reputed of the "horse people" in what to the Puranic chroniclers would have been ancient times. It is of course possible that female warriors were common to all of the tribes identified as Assakas/Asvakas/Asmakas, but it may also be the case -- and perhaps more likely -- that the Puranic chroniclers simply displaced a characteristic feature of one tribe of "horse people" onto another when the Assakenoi of the northwest region had disappeared from Brahmanical awareness.

Whatever may be the origin of this particular Puranic view of the "horse people" of the Deccan, it seems certain in any case that it reflects a long-standing awareness at some level that the tribes designated as Assakas, Asvakas, or Asmakas had certain features in common that blurred the distinctions between them in terms of their separate identities and locations. The same confusion within a context of assumed commonality seems to be reflected in the use of

Asvaka and Asmaka as apparently equivalent names for both the Swat Valley and Deccan tribes, a confusion that is at the same time obscured and underscored by the fact that the Pali name Assaka that is used in Buddhist and Jain texts can represent either Sanskrit name. If this dual nomenclature reflects a certain confusion in the sources, however, it also may offer an essential clue to the cultural identity of at least the Deccan tribe to which the alternative names Asvaka and Asmaka are most often applied.

The first of these names, as noted earlier, is derived from the Sanskrit asva, "horse," and can be translated as "horse people." There is little uncertainty about the meaning of this descriptive name, especially in light of the Greek reports of horse-riding Assakenoi and of the neighboring Aspasioi whose name is derived from the Iranian word for "horse." This is most likely the intended reference of the Pali term Assaka as well, although the Pali word assa is more ambiguous and could represent other Sanskrit words besides asva. All of these names together in any case seem to confirm the importance of horses in the culture of the tribes in question, and the use of the names for these particular tribes must have been meant to distinguish them from other tribes in the degree of that importance.

It appears from this evidence that Asvaka and other terms for "horse people" identified a definitive feature of certain tribes that set them apart from other tribes. But if this is so, then what significance should be given to the alternative name Asmaka that is used instead of Asvaka in most of the Puranic genealogies? The

name seems without doubt to be derived from the Sanskrit word asman, which means "stone." By analogy with the formation of asva-ka, the name asma-ka would thus mean "stone people" in the sense of people for whom stones were especially important in their culture. Since the same people seem to be called in Sanskrit both "horse people" and "stone people" (Asvaka and Asmaka) interchangeably, or designated in Pali as Assaka, which can mean either, the tribe so identified must have been one distinguished by both horses and stones. The most obvious candidate for this designation, in fact the only known candidate, is the iron-using people whose horse culture and megalithic burial sites are the most prominent feature of Deccan archaeology throughout most of the first millennium BCE down to at least the time of the Mauryan Empire. This case is strengthened by the parallel use -- or confusion -- of the terms Asvaka and Asmaka to refer to the Assakenoi tribe of the Swat Valley whose stone-lined graves and stone-circle burials seem to have at least some obvious features in common with the Deccan megalithic culture.

Connecting the southern megalithic culture with the Assaka/Asvaka/Asmaka tribe in the region of Pratisthana would help close the large gap in Deccan history or proto-history between the end of the Jorwe Culture in the Godavari valley near the end of the second millennium BCE and the rise of the Satavahana dynasty in the same region near the end of the first millennium BCE. There is little doubt that the earlier tribal states formed the background for Satavahana rule, since the dynasty's capital from the beginning was

Pratisthana and its initial territorial base was the states of Asmaka and Mulaka. By the time of the most powerful Satavahana ruler, Gautamiputra Satakarni (ca. 106-130 CE), the dynasty's Deccan territories also included the region of Vidarbha to the east of Asmaka and Mulaka and the western Deccan region further south of Asmaka and Mulaka as far as the Krishna River, to which Gautamiputra added substantial territory in Malwa and Gujarat that he gained by victories over the Saka ruler Nahapana.

Within the Deccan region north of the Krishna River, only the eastern kingdom of Kalinga remained free of Satavahana control under the contemporary Chedi dynasty that emerged to power in the first century BCE under the rule of the Maharaja Kharavela, a devout Jain, and that controlled the coastal region from the Mahanadi delta in modern Orissa to the Krishna delta in modern Andhra Pradesh. The eastern coastal region, however, had never been part of the megalithic cultural area, at least as defined by megalithic tombs. The Satavahana territory in the Deccan thus encompassed all of the earlier megalithic cultural area between the Narmada and Krishna rivers, plus the region of the earlier Jorwe culture and the Asvaka/Asmaka and Mulaka states -- a territory that included at the height of Satavahana power the regions of modern Maharashtra, northwest Andhra Pradesh, and northern Karnataka, and that was the geographical locus after the Satavahanas for the successive kingdoms of the Vakatakas, the Calukyas, and the Rashtrakutas later in the first millennium CE.

Given the cultural/historical background of this region from the second millennium BCE onward, it is tempting to see the expansion of Satavahana rule in the first two centuries CE as the unification of an ancient cultural zone that was given its formative character by the earlier sequentially related Indus, Malwa, Jorwe, and megalithic cultures. While there may have been underlying cultural affinities throughout the territory, however, the main stimulus for political unification must have been the absorption of this region into the Mauryan Empire after Chandragupta's conquest of the Deccan in the late fourth or early third century BCE. The details of this conquest are not at all clear, but the territorial limits of Mauryan control are evidenced by the rock edicts placed in strategic locations by Chandragupta's grandson, the emperor Asoka (ca. 269-232 BCE), during the first two decades of his reign. Although a few of these edicts appear along internal trade routes, most of them -- unlike the more central pillar edicts of later years -- were located near the boundaries of the empire in the northwest, in the newly conquered region of Kalinga (Asoka's only personal conquest), at the important Mauryan/Buddhist center of Amaravati on the lower Krishna river just beyond the eastern edge of the Deccan plateau, and in the Mauryan-controlled region of the southern Deccan in the Tungabhadra valley -- this latter region, with six different sites, having by far the largest number of known rock edicts of any region in the Empire (Minor Rock Edict I at Gavimath, Maski, and Palkigunda north of the Tungabhadra, both Minor Rock Edicts I and II at Siddapura, Brahmagiri, and Jatinga-Ramesvara south of the Tungabhadra, and Minor Rock Edict II at Erragudi and Rajula-

Mandagiri just to the east between the Tungabhadra and Penner valleys). (See K. A. Nikam and Richard McKeon, The Edicts of Asoka, U. of Chicago Press, 1959, p. 9; for the Asokan inscription at Amaravati, see Vimala Begley, "From Iron Age to Early Historical in South Indian Archaeology," in Jerome Jacobson, ed., Studies in the Archaeology of India and Pakistan, American Institute of Indian Studies, 1986, pp. 297-319.)

The importance of maintaining Mauryan control in the Deccan is indicated not only by the number of Minor Rock Edicts in the south but by the establishment of one of the four Mauryan vice-royalties in the Tungabhadra valley at a site referred to in inscriptions as Suvarnagiri, "Mountain of Gold" or "Gold Mountain" (K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India, second ed'n, Oxford, 1958, p. 85; HCIP Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 79). The location of a major administrative center in this remote region is intriguing, since the three other centers were all in much more developed areas: Taxila in Gandhara, Ujjain in Malwa, and Tosali in the Kalinga region that had been conquered by Asoka after a major military campaign. Taxila and Ujjain were major administrative centers on the two most important Mauryan trade routes: Taxila on the northwest route to Bactria, the Seleucid Empire, and Central Asia; Ujjain on the main route south to the western Deccan that continued on to Mahismati, Ajanta, and Pratisthana. Tosali, near the Mahanadi delta in the area of present-day Bhubanesvara and Puri, must have had the same role on the coastal route south from Pataliputra and the Ganges delta down to Amaravati, most likely reinforced by the Asokan-era

fortress of Sisupalgarh just to its north across the Mahanadi. Given the strategic importance of these three Mauryan vice-royal centers, we can assume that the fourth -- the center at Suvarnagiri in the southern Deccan -- must have had a similar strategic function in the Mauryan system. But if so, what might that function have been at the extreme southern end of the Mauryan territories, some 500 miles south of Ujjain, in a region with no urban centers and no known established kingdoms?

Any answer to this question is clearly speculative, since contemporary sources give no more information than the name and general location of Suvarnagiri. The name itself, however, which means "Gold Mountain," may provide at least a clue to the importance of a center located as it was in precisely the same area as the Neolithic sites a thousand years before and the early megalithic sites that succeeded them until the Mauryan conquest. Whatever other function Suvarnagiri served, it must have been the main Mauryan point of access to the gold resources of the Kolar region further south near the headwaters of the Penner and Palar rivers. The Kolar region itself may have been under direct Mauryan control, since later Tamil sources remember a Mauryan invasion that penetrated even further to the south, but even if it were not it must have provided the raw material for the "articles of gold" that Kautilya lists in his Arthashastra as among the many riches brought to the Mauryan capital by traders from the Deccan along the southern trade route. (Sastri, History of South India, p. 81) One of the functions of the Mauryan center at Suvarnagiri, and probably the

reason for its name, must thus have been to assure continuing control of the gold that passed from the Kolar mines to the coffers and craftsmen further north -- a role that the Neolithic villagers and megalithic pastoral warriors had earlier played at the same location in the Tungabhadra valley.

Despite its name, however, Suvargagiri was of course not established only to oversee the trade in gold, but to administer and support Mauryan interests both internally and externally. Like the other three vice-royal centers, Suvarnagiri must have been located where it was to combine security and strategic access to other areas: i.e., its immediate region and lines of communication with the capital must have been considered secure, and it was close enough to potential problem areas to respond effectively. Taxila, for example, was located safely east of the Indus River opposite the Kabul valley and the Khyber Pass near modern-day Rawalpindi, ideally positioned to protect Mauryan territory and interests in and beyond the Hindu Kush; Ujjain, secure on the Malwa Plateau, could defend Mauryan access southward to the Deccan and westward to the Saurashtra/Kathiawar Peninsula and the lower Indus valley; Tosali, in the delta region of the Mahanadi, could secure the coastal trade route against incursions from the heavily forested interior valleys and highlands to its west. Each of the vice-royal centers, moreover, including Suvarnagiri, was responsible not only for defense and foreign relations -- a concern especially for Taxila and Suvarnagiri -- but also for internal pacification and, at least under Asoka, for

propagating a new Dharma that cut across traditional social, religious, and tribal divisions.

Asoka made no secret about his policies regarding Dharma, but instead made a great effort to explain them and give them public recognition in the series of rock edicts he had carved in prominent locations throughout his empire. The most important of these edicts are the set of fourteen (the Fourteen Rock Edicts) inscribed at six different locations near the borders of the empire and the slightly different set (the Kalinga Edicts) at Tosali/Dhauli and Jaugada along the eastern route. The Fourteen Rock edicts effectively define the major boundaries of the imperial territory, and are found at Sapara/Surparaka on the Arabian Sea north of present-day Bombay; at Girnar in the Saurashtra Peninsula; at Mansehra in the upper Indus valley north of Taxila; at Shahbazgarhi, across the Indus to the west of Mansehra and Taxila; at Kalsi, near the points where the Yamuna and Ganges emerge from the Himalayas onto the North India Plain; and -- in the only southern location -- at Yerragudi/Erragudi in the Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh between the Tungabhadra and Penner rivers.

On the basis of both internal and external evidence, the Kalinga Edicts (which consist of Rock Edicts I-X, two edicts addressed to local officials, and Rock edict XIV) were carved around 259/258 BCE, three years after Asoka's conquest of Kalinga in 262/261 BCE in the eighth year after his coronation, and the standard set of the Fourteen Rock Edicts was carved at the other six sites around 258/257 BCE. The latter date is established with some certainty

from Asoka's reference in Rock Edict XIII to five kings (Antiochus II of Syria, Ptolemy II of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrenene, and Alexander of Epirus) whose dates of concurrent rule were 261-258 BCE. (See Edicts of Asoka, pp. 8-9, 17-18, and 29.) The same Edict also makes reference to the Cholas and Pandyas "as far as Sri Lanka," and Rock Edict II refers to "the border territories of the Chalas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputra, the Keralaputra, the Sri Lankans, the Yona king named Antiochos, and those kings who are neighbors of Antiochus." (Edicts, pp. 29 and 64)

It is evident from these citations that Asoka had substantial knowledge of kingdoms and peoples beyond his own domain. Rock Edict II claims that Asoka has "made provision for two kinds of medical treatment, treatment for men and for animals" not only in his own dominions but in all of these border territories, and Rock Edict XIII claims that he has achieved a "conquest by Dharma" among all of these peoples as far away as the lands "where the Yona king Antiyoka (Antiochos II) rules." Whatever the actual nature and extent of these medical provisions and "conquests by Dharma" may have been, it is clear that Asoka not only knew about his neighbors but had significant interaction with them, and that his concept of rule was not just maintaining military/political order but involved active benevolence and an effort to propagate the principles of Dharma even beyond his own empire.

If this concept of rule was applied beyond the borders of Asoka's empire, it was even more directly applied within his domains where his role as king gave him transformative power. This

is especially evident in what has been called Minor Rock Edict I, the first and most widely dispersed of the three Minor Rock Edicts that were inscribed around 260/259 BCE just before the propagation of the Kalinga Edicts and the Fourteen Rock Edicts. Unlike the Kalinga and Fourteen Rock Edicts, all of the Minor Rock edicts were inscribed at internal sites, not on the external borders of the empire, and all of them are located in areas that had -- and in some cases still do have -- substantial tribal populations. Minor Rock Edict I appears at all of the twelve sites at which these edicts have been found, sometimes alone (at six sites: Gujarra, Rupnath, and Sahasram in the north between the Yamuna/Ganges valley and the Vindhya mountains, and Maski, Gavimath, and Palkigundu in the south in the vicinity of Suvarnagiri), sometimes paired with Minor Rock Edict II (at five southern sites: Brahmagiri, Jatinga-Ramesvara, and Siddapura in the upper Tungabhadra valley south of Suvarnagiri, and Rajula-Mandagiri and Yerragudi/Erragudi some hundred miles to the east), and in one case paired with Minor Rock Edict III (at Bairat in Rajasthan).

Only at Yerragudi/Erragudi does a set of Minor Rock Edicts (in this case, I and II) appear at the same site as the set of Fourteen Rock Edicts, and this is at a relatively remote location at the eastern edge of the Deccan plateau between the Tungabhadra and Penner valleys that was almost certainly a tribal area and was a "border" (in keeping with the location of other sets of the Fourteen Rock Edicts) only in the sense that Mauryan control may not have extended eastward into the coastal lowlands beyond this point. All

of the Asokan inscriptions in the south, both at Yerragudi/Erragudi and in the Suvarnagiri area, were written in a special southern variety of the Brahmi script that was used in inscriptions elsewhere, which suggests a regional adaptation of a writing form already in use further south in the Chola or Pandya regions beyond the Mauryan borders. (See History of South India, p. 25) This regional variation, the conjunction of the two categories of edicts, and the large number of sites with Minor Rock Edicts -- eight out of the total of twelve known sites within the Mauryan territory -- all point to the special situation in the region served by the vice-royal center at Suvarnagiri.

The key to understanding this special situation in the south would seem to be the concentration of Minor Rock Edicts in the region: eight of the twelve examples of Minor Rock Edict I, five of them paired with Minor Rock Edict II. Minor Rock Edict II does not appear outside the southern region around Yerragudi/Erragudi and the other cluster of southern sites south of the upper Tungabhadra. Minor Rock Edict III appears only at the site of Bairat in Rajasthan, and is specifically addressed to the Buddhist Sangha there to tell them what Asoka considered the true texts on Dharma; it thus seems to fall outside the more general concerns of the other Minor Rock Edicts, and is related to them only by the fact that it appears at this site along with Minor Rock Edict I and is -- like all of the other sites where that edict appears -- in an area with a significant tribal population.

If we consider this distribution pattern as a whole, it is evident that Minor Rock Edict I represents the most important message that Asoka sought to convey with his Minor Rock Edicts, since it appears at each of the twelve sites where these edicts were inscribed. Minor Rock Edict III is addressed to a particular community of monks, though it may well have been expected to have wider influence. Minor Rock Edict II, which appears only in two groups of clustered sites in the south, is also about Dharma but at a level of generality that clearly is intended for laypersons. Proclaimed in the name of "King Priyadarsi" ("the one who looks with kindness," or "the benevolent one"), the edict defines Dharma not in specifically Buddhist terms but as simple virtues "conducive to long life:"

"One should obey one's father and mother. One should respect the supreme value and sacredness of life. One should speak the truth. One should practice these virtues of Dharma. In the same way, pupils should honor their teachers, and in families one should behave with fitting courtesy to relatives. This is the traditional rule of Dharma, and it is conducive to long life. Men should act according to it."

(Edicts of Asoka, p. 43)

Minor Rock Edict I differs from the other two Minor Rock Edicts in both distribution and content. In terms of distribution, it appears not only at the two clusters of sites in the south where Minor Rock Edict II is found, but separately at three sites just to their north between the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers in the region of Suvarnagiri. More strikingly, it is found also at four sites north of the Deccan: at Bairat in Rajasthan, where it appears with Minor Rock Edict III; at Gujarra in eastern Rajasthan to the north of the

Chambal river, roughly sixty miles south-southwest of Mathura; at Rupnath in the upper Son valley; and at Sahasram in the lower Son valley, roughly eighty miles west of Bodh Gaya. The location of these edicts, both north and south, was surely not made at random, but must reflect a deliberate policy by Asoka to convey the message of Minor Rock Edict I to specific groups of his subjects and to do so at those specific sites.

If we look at the sites of Minor Rock Edict I from this perspective, the only obvious factor that the twelve sites have in common is that they were in or on the margin of regions with substantial tribal populations. The region around Bairat, for example, at the northern end of the Aravalli mountains, was populated in the second and first centuries BCE by a tribe known as the Salvas, while the region southwest of Bairat near modern-day Udaipur was ruled by the Sibis -- a tribe that had fought against Alexander near the juncture of the Jhelum and Chenab rivers in the Punjab in 326/325 BCE and whose capital of Madhyamika near Udaipur was invaded by the Bactrian Greeks under Demetrius around 200 BCE, some sixty years after Asoka carved his Minor Rock Edicts. We can assume from this history that the region around Bairat in the corridor between the Yamuna River and the Aravalli Range was the scene of substantial activity and movement by semi-autonomous tribes during Asoka's reign, and that one of his concerns was to win their acceptance of his rule as suzerain over their shifting tribal kingdoms.

The means that Asoka chose to achieve this goal was what he called "conquest by Dharma, Dharma-vijaya (Rock Edict 14; see The Edicts of Asoka, p. 29). Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta (324-300 BCE) had established the Mauryan dynasty by his military conquest of the Nanda dynasty of Magadha, whose empire by the time of Alexander's invasion in 326 BCE encompassed all of northern India and extended also well into the northern and western Deccan (HCIP Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 31-35). Chandragupta and his son Bindusara (ca. 300-273 BCE) pushed the boundaries further in the west and south, bequeathing to Asoka an empire that extended into and beyond the Hindu Kush in the west on the borders of the Seleucid Empire and into the southern Deccan beyond the Tungabhadra as far as the territory of the Cholas, Pandyas, and Keralaputras (Cheras) in the southern end of the peninsula along what were later known as the Coromandel Coast in the east (Cholas and Pandyas) and the Malabar Coast on the west (Cheras). Asoka's only military campaign was against the Kalinga kingdom in the northern region of the eastern coast between the Mahanadi and Godavari rivers, the last remaining major political power in the northern Deccan still outside Mauryan control, and it was in reaction to his bloody victory there that he announced his rejection of further conquest by arms and turned to the conquest by Dharma.

Asoka's propagation of Dharma had both external and internal aspects. Externally, as noted earlier, it was directed toward the Yona (Greek) kingdoms of Antiochus and beyond in the west, and toward the Cholas, Pandyas, Keralaputras (Cheras), Satiyaputras, and

Sri Lankans in the south (Rock Edicts II and XIII; Edicts of Asoka, pp. 29 and 64). Internally, the conquest by Dharma was intended for at least three different categories of people within Asoka's dominion: ordinary subjects of all religious persuasions, "forest peoples" (Rock Edict XIII; Edicts, p. 28), and a variety of groups of foreign or tribal identity designated by name in Rock Edicts V and XIII: the Yonas, Kambojas, and Gandharas (all people of the northwest region; see Edicts, pp. 29-30 and 59); the Rastrikas, Pitinikas, "and other peoples living on the western borders of my kingdom" (Rock Edict V; Edicts, p. 59); and the Nabhakas and Nabhapanktis, the hereditary Bhojas, and the Andhras and Paulindas (Rock Edict XIII, which gives no further geographical information; Edicts, p. 30).

It is clear from the location of the Minor Rock Edicts that they were elements in Asoka's internal program of conquest by Dharma, and it seems equally clear from their sites outside the major settled areas that they were directed not to the ordinary settled population but to the "forest peoples" and tribes in the region from Rajasthan southward. We can thus eliminate from their intended recipients the Yonas, Kambojas, and Gandharas of the northwest and the Nabhakas and Nabhapanktis who probably were on the Himalayan frontier (Edicts, p. 30), leaving a list of five groups mentioned in the Rock Edicts who would seem to fall in the target categories: the Rastrikas and Pitinikas, the Bhojas, and the Andhras and Paulindas.

The only geographical location given for any of these groups is the statement in Rock Edict V that the Rastrikas and Pitinikas lived "on the western borders" of Asoka's kingdom, a rather ambiguous

location that most scholars have interpreted as meaning not the far west or northwest but instead the western side of the Deccan near the Western Ghats that marked the limit of Mauryan control (which did not, as far as is known, extend along the western coastline south of the Rock Edict at Sopara at the northern end of the Konkan). The Paulindas/Pulindas and Andhras are mentioned in the Aitareya Brahmana and the Sankhayana Srautasutra as descendants of a king of Vidarbha whose sons were condemned by the sage Visvamitra to live on the borders of Aryavarta (History of South India, p. 65). Traditional Brahmanical histories knew the Pulindas as aboriginal tribes located in hill country both north and south of the Vindhya (HCIP, Vol. I, The Vedic Age, pp. 266 and 317-318), while the Andhras appear in Brahmanical texts sometimes as aboriginal tribes (ibid., p. 266) and sometimes as a powerful Deccan people or kingdom, though without a clear location (HCIP, Vol II, The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 79). As noted earlier, however, a Buddhist commentary on the Sutta-Nipata identifies the Andhras with the two kingdoms of Assaka and Mulaka in the region of Paithan/Pratisthana, which fits the later description of the Satavahanas as Andhras (ibid., pp. 12-13, 191-195) and places the location of the Andhras in the upper Godavari valley of the western Deccan.

The remaining reference in the Fourteen Rock Edicts is to what some translators interpret as "the Bhojas and Paitryanikas" (Edicts of Asoka, p. 30) and others as "the hereditary Bhoja rulers" (HCIP, The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 78), the difference being whether the term paitryanikas is taken as the name of a separate group/tribe or

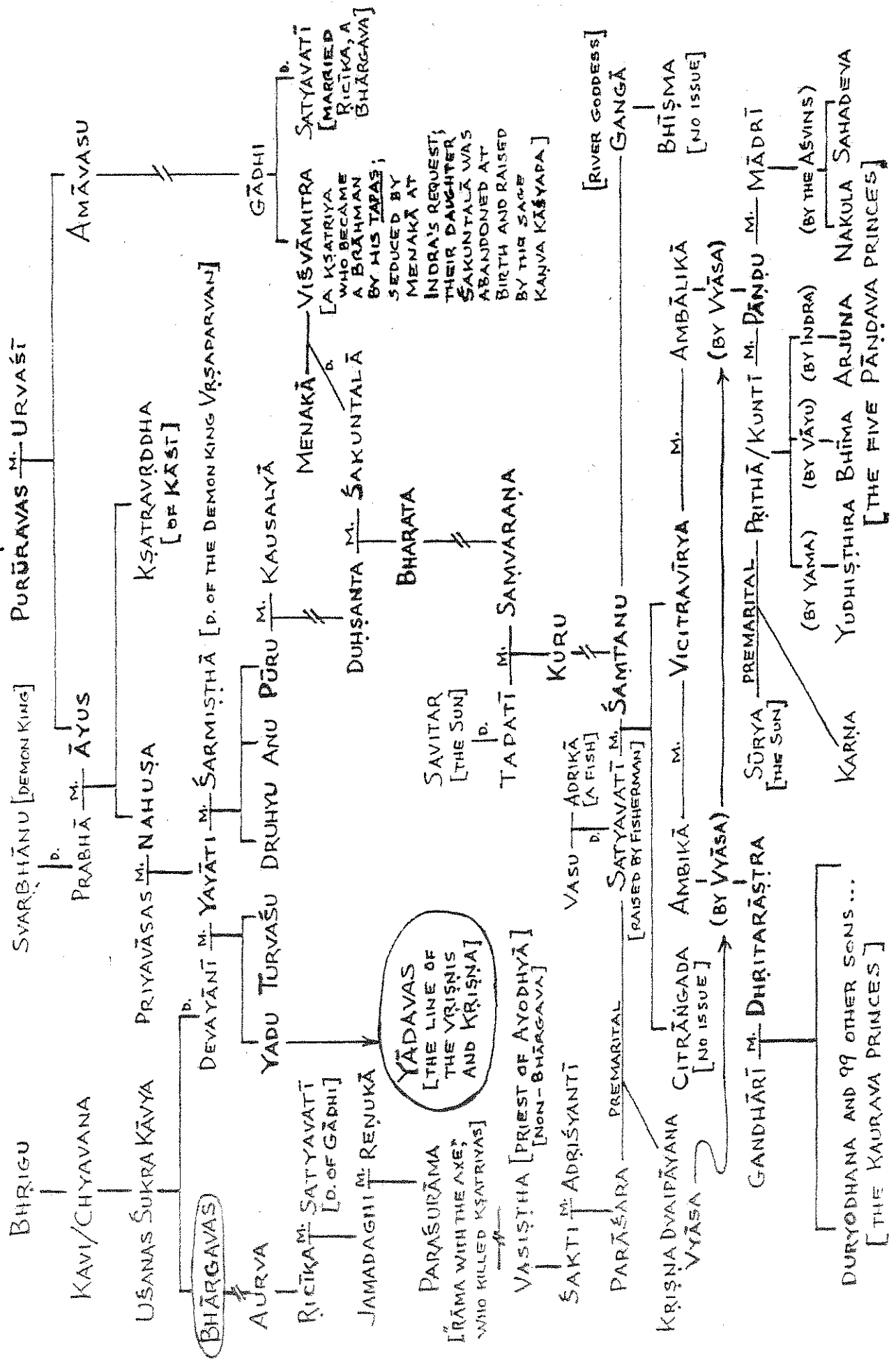
whether it is taken as an adjective modifying Bhojas in the literal sense of the term as a derivative of pitṛ, "father" or "ancestor," in which case paitryanika would mean "ancestral" or hereditary." In the absence of any other reference to a tribe or people called Paitryanikas, the adjectival meaning seems more likely, especially since -- in contrast to the other groups or tribes named in the Edicts -- the Bhojas had a relatively well-established place in the traditional genealogies that were eventually set down in the Puranas in the early centuries CE. Granted that these genealogies were given their final form in the Puranas long after the time of Asoka and that they were, moreover, the product of Brahmins rather than Buddhist or Jains, they nonetheless represent the closest thing we have to an account of earlier Indian history. The form is without question more a constructed mythology than a record of observed events, but the genealogies do preserve some collective memory -- albeit often distorted, inconsistent, and ideologically biased -- of what groups and peoples were important in the historical past and how they interacted in the overall pattern of cultural development.

The Bhojas, like all of the non-Aryans tribes, appear in the Brahmanical genealogies as part of the Lunar Dynasty, an obviously mythological lineage descended according to the Puranas from Manu, the progenitor of all the human race, by way of Ila, the feminine aspect of Manu's first offspring Ila/Sudyumna, who had a dual female/male personality (HCIP, Vol. I, The Vedic Age, pp. 275-276). Generations after its origin, according to the Puranic histories, the Lunar Dynasty had split into a number of different lines of which the

M. = MARRIED
D. = DAUGHTER

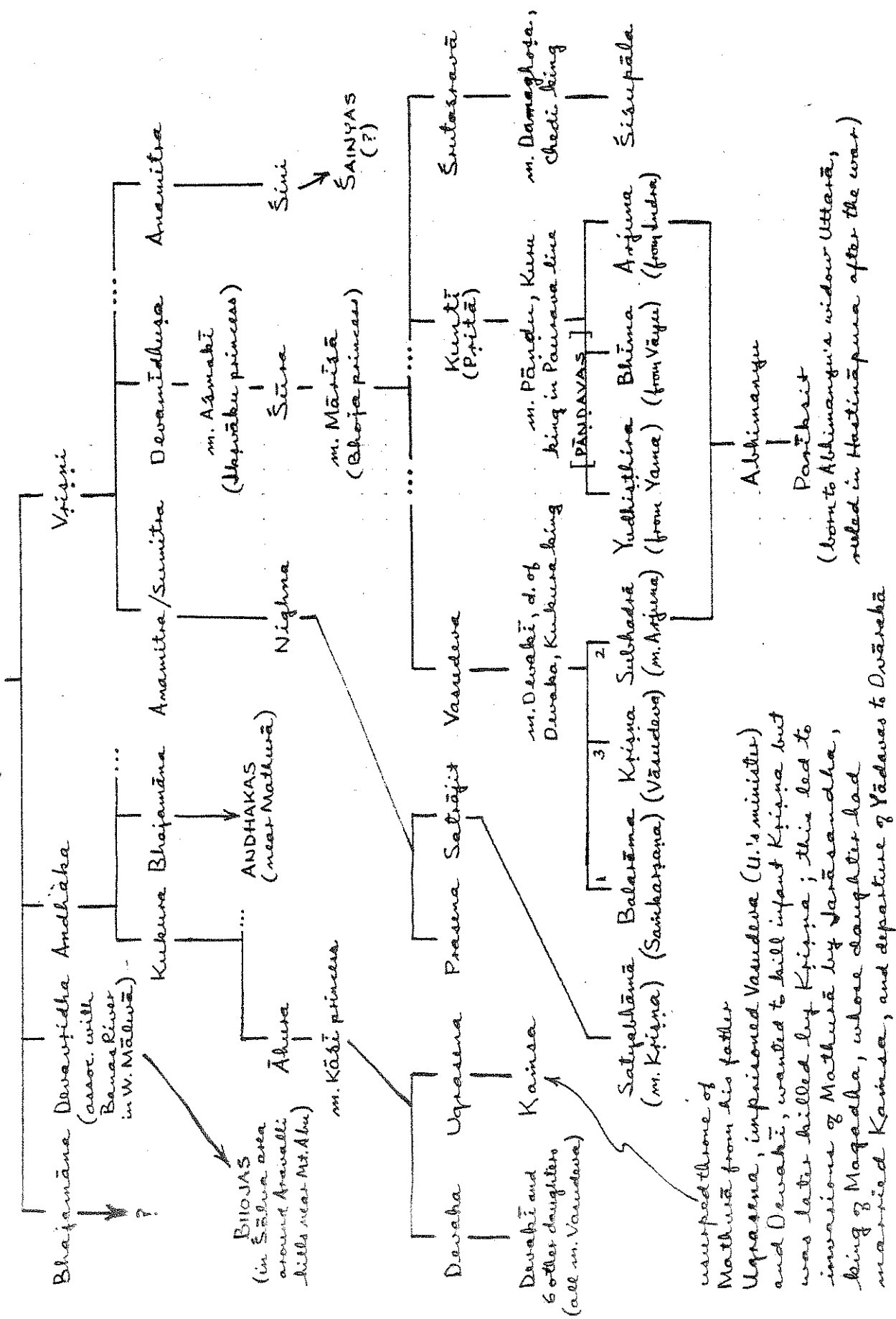
[LLĀ [FEMALE / MALE PROGENITOR OF THE DYNASTY]

PRIESTLY LINEAGES



YĀDĀVAS

Bhīma Sātvata
(ruled in Mathurā)



most important were those of Yadu (ancestor of the Yadavas and Haihayas) and Puru (founder of the Paurava line that gave rise to the Bharatas and Kurus whose story is the central theme of the Mahabharata) (*ibid.*, pp. 277-288 and 296). Bhojas appear in the lineages of both the initially powerful Haihayas and their Yadava relatives who supplanted them, and figure also in the story of the Yadava/Vrisni prince Krisna whose childhood exploits are described in the Harivamsa and later Puranas.

The Haihayas first emerged into prominence in the Puranic histories when the Haihaya king Mahismant founded the town Mahismati on the Narmada (*ibid.*, p. 282). Mahismant's descendant Arjuna/Sahasrarjuna Kartavirya, a powerful monarch and chakravartin, ruled from Mahismati until he was killed by the Brahman warrior Parasurama, a member of the aggressive Bhargava clan, who then set out to "rid the earth of the Ksatriyas" -- some of whom, it is said, "fled to the mountains or hid themselves among the womenfolk," a charge that links them with Mulaka, son of the Asmaka who founded Pratisthana/Paudanya, who is identified as one of the frightened Ksatriyas who hid among women to escape Parasurama (*ibid.*, pp. 284-285 and 293). Haihaya power nonetheless continued despite Parasurama's efforts, and generations after Arjuna/Sahasrarjuna's death the still extensive Haihaya territory was divided among five separate Haihaya lines that included the Avantis in Malwa and the Bhojas near the Aravalli hills in Rajasthan (*ibid.*, pp. 282-287).

Haihaya dominance effectively ended only when the Yadavas, their rival relatives in the Yadu line, extended their power northward from Vidarbha in the Deccan to Mathura on the Yamuna. The Yadavas in the Mathura region eventually split into four main lines: the Kukuras, who ruled Mathura; the Andhakas, who ruled somewhere near Mathura; the Vrisnis, who served the Kukuras as ministers; and the Bhojas of Marttikavata, who controlled the region between the Banas River and the Aravalli range southwest of Mathura. In the period just before the Mahabharata war, the Kukura king of Mathura was Ugnasena and his minister was Vasudeva, the eldest son of the Vrisni king Sura and a Bhoja princess named Marisa. Vasudeva married Ugnasena's niece Devaki, who became the mother of Balarama, Krisna, and their sister Subhadra. Vasudeva's eldest sister, Pritha, was adopted by Sura's nephew Kuntibhoja and was thereafter known as Kunti; married to king Pandu, the Kuru king in the Paurava/Bharata line, Kunti became the mother of the Pandava princes Yuddhisthira, Bhima, and Arjuna -- the latter of whom, to complete the cycle, eventually married Krisna's sister Subhadra (ibid., pp. 301-303).

However we assess the historicity of these accounts, the traditional genealogical stories must surely reflect to some degree the historical interrelationship or juxtaposition of the Haihayas, Yadavas, Bhojas, and Vrisnis in the region bounded by Mathura, the Aravalli mountains, the Chambal River, and the Saurashtra Peninsula -- i.e., in the region later known as Rajasthan. Vrisnis figure most prominently in the Krisna story, which turns around the

Vrisni princes Krishna and Balarama, but Bhojas also have a significant role. The Bhoja princess Marisa is the mother of Vasudeva and therefore the paternal grandmother of Balarama, Krishna, and Subhadra; she is also the maternal grandmother of the main Pandava princes through her daughter Kunti, who received her name from her adopted father Kuntibhoja. The Kukura ruler of Mathura, Ugnasena, is still remembered in the later Bhagavata Purana as "the king of the Yadus, Bhojas, and Andhakas," and her son Kamsa is similarly called "the Lord of the Bhojas" (Bhagavata Purana X. 1. 69, X. 2. 19 and .41). However accurate the stories may be as history, they thus nonetheless convey a consistent view of the Bhojas as an important component in the cultural world that centered around Mathura but extended outward to the south and west into the tribal region between the Aravalli range and the Chambal and Banas valleys.

All of this raises the obvious question of whether the Bhojas who appear in the Brahmanical genealogies and Puranic stories are the same as the Bhojas whom Asoka mentions in Rock Edict XIII. Any attempt to equate the two obviously poses serious methodological problems. Asoka's Edict dates from around 258-257 BCE (Edicts, p. 18), gives no geographical location for the Bhojas, and provides no explanation for who or what the Bhojas may be except for the statement -- if we take paitryanika as an adjective -- that they are "hereditary" or "associated with ancestors." The Puranic genealogies and histories by contrast date in their present form from no earlier than the third or fourth century C. E. and deal with the Bhojas either

in the context of an extended genealogical history of the Lunar Dynasty or as a family or kingdom involved in marriage alliances with other branches of the Yadavas in the region around Mathura. There are geographical locations given in the Puranas for various branches of the Haihayas and Yadavas, including the Bhojas, but the names and places are often inconsistent, vaguely located, or simply no longer identifiable at this remove in time. It is clear that the world of the Haihayas and Yadavas was not a familiar world to the Brahmanical genealogists, and is also likely that some of the confusions and inconsistencies in their accounts reflect the actual shifting locations, names, and relative strengths of the tribes and tribal kingdoms identified as Haihayas or Yadavas.

Despite these problems, however, there are some general patterns in the Puranic genealogies and stories that seem to correlate with the pattern of Asoka's edicts, and there is evidence from outside these two sources that suggests that the correlation can be explained in terms of underlying cultural/religious phenomena. More specifically, it seems certain that the Bhojas who appear in the Puranic genealogical histories are the same basic tribe or people mentioned in Asoka's Edict XIII, and that the differences between these two sources result not from different identities of the Bhojas but from the very different viewpoints and policies of the genealogists on the one hand and Asoka on the other.

The Puranic genealogies, we must recognize to begin with, reflect a very limited geographical knowledge beyond northern India. They are accurate and detailed in what they say about the region

from Gandhara and the Punjab through Madhyadesa to the eastern end of the Doab, knowledgeable about the region to the north and east of the Doab as far as the Mauryan capital at Pataliputra, familiar with the region south and east of Pataliputra near the Ganges and the region along the southern edge of the Yamuna valley, but relatively unfamiliar with the Vindhyan highlands further south toward the Son and Narmada valleys, most of the region of the Malwa Plateau, and the region of Rajasthan south and west of Mathura. They know of the kingdom of Avanti in Malwa and its capital at Ujjain, but from the Narmada valley southward they have very little knowledge except for the existence of Vidarbha in the north-central Deccan, the Haihaya city of Mahismati on the Narmada, and the Asmakas and Mulakas further to the south in the upper Godavari valley.

For the genealogists, this world that they knew was taken to be a self-contained island called Jambudvipa, an ocean-girded continent populated by the offspring of a single progenitor, Manu. The variety of people in its various regions was therefore, from their perspective, the result of a progressive divergence of Manu's descendants into lineage such as the Solar and Lunar dynasties and eventually into families that ruled the various regions of Jambudvipa. The major lineages in this system were not entirely pure, because the most important lines in the Lunar Dynasty descended from Yayati, great-great grandson of Ila, whose sons were all the products of improper relationships: one with Devayani, the daughter of a Bhargava Brahman priest who served the Asuras, from whom the ancestor of the Yadavas and Haihayas was born; the other

with Sarmistha, the daughter of the Asura king Vrsaparvan, from whom the ancestor of the Pauravas, Bharatas, and Kurus was born. Even if not pure, however, these lineages held the hereditary right to kingship that stemmed from Manu himself, the first ruler and law-giver of the present age, whose ancestral role ensured that all of his descendants in the Solar and Lunar dynasties -- Ikshvakus, Pauravas, Haihayas, Yadavas, and Bhojas alike -- could be considered valid Aryan Ksatriyas.

It was this legitimation of kings that was the central concern of the Brahmanical genealogists, beginning probably in the latter half of the first millennium BCE and continuing on into the early centuries CE when the first Puranas were compiled. From the perspective of historical anthropology, their theory -- or mythology -- of origins was fundamentally flawed. They were not, however, historical anthropologists; they were hereditary priests living in a time when true Aryan rulers were vanishing, and with them the traditional social/political role of Brahmins in Aryan kingdoms. The rise of Magadha to power in the eastern Gangetic region marked the beginning of the end for the old Aryan kingdoms in Madhyadesa, and the establishment of Mauryan rule over all of northern India effectively eliminated the role of hereditary Aryan Ksatriyas.

Faced with this disappearance of the old Aryan Ksatriya families, or at least their dramatic decline in power, Brahmins could either accept the loss of their hereditary patrons or create new ones. As the Brahmanical genealogies prove, they clearly chose the latter course as the only one that would ensure the preservation

of Brahmanical society and its values. There is no issue in these genealogies about which of the lines of hereditary rulers are Aryan and which are not, because all of the dynasties descended from Manu are de facto legitimate. Thus legitimated by descent, all of the Solar and Lunar dynasties are therefore implicitly Aryan and have a valid place in the Brahmanical system.

Given this concern to identify and legitimize new groups as Ksatriyas, we can understand the genealogists' interest in the Haihayas and Yadavas. The geographical location of the various Haihaya and Yadava lines is often unclear or inconsistent in the genealogical histories, but it is evident that their power lay outside Madhyadesa on the margins of the Brahmanical world. Yadu, the founder of the Yadava/Haihaya lineage, is said to have been given by his father Yayati the territory in northern Malwa between the Chambal and Ken rivers, and to have captured the region of modern-day Gujarat and the Saurashtra Peninsula from the Rakshasa demons. Sasabindu, one of his descendants in the Yadava line whose daughter married the king of Ayodhya, created an even more extensive kingdom that stretched from the region south of Kausambi in the east to Rajasthan in the west (HCIP, Vol. I, The Vedic Age, p. 278). The Haihayas, the other line that stemmed from Yadu, were initially based in southern Malwa but extended their power further southward to Mahismati on the Narmada under the rule of Mahismant, the first important Haihaya king, whose successor Bhadrasrenya conquered Benares in the eastern Gangetic region and ruled it until it was lost to the demon Rakshasas (ibid., pp. 282 and 287). Mahismati was also

the capital of Arjuna/Sahasrarjuna Kartavirya until he was killed by the Bhargava warrior Parasurama, after which the Haihayas split into five different lines that included the Bhojas in Rajasthan and the Avantis in Malwa (*ibid.*, pp. 283-287).

The Yadava line of the Lunar Dynasty remained in relative obscurity according to the genealogies until the Solar Dynasty of Ayodhya emerged from a period of decline brought about by Haihaya invasions of the eastern Gangetic region. In the wake of these invasions, the genealogies claim, the territory of Ayodhya north of the Ganges was entered and settled by wild tribes who were called Ksatriyas, respected Brahmins, and observed Brahmanical rituals. This period of disruption was ended when Sagara emerged as king of Ayodhya, defeated the still threatening Haihayas, and drove away their foreign allies who are identified in the genealogies as Sakas, Yavana, Kambojas, and Pahlavas. King Vidarbha of the Yadavas, to avoid attack by Sagara, made peace with him by offering his daughter to Sagara in marriage and then retired into the region of the northern Deccan that was thereafter called Vidarbha in his name. After Sagara's death, the Yadavas of Vidarbha extended their territory northward into the Haihaya country south of the Yamuna, where Vidarbha's son Kaisika founded the kingdom of Chedi between the Chambal and Ken rivers. The extensive Yadava territory, including areas formerly ruled by Haihayas, was consolidated by later kings and eventually ruled by Bhima Satvata, whose sons founded the lineages that appear in the Krishna story: the Bhojas in

Rajasthan, the Andhakas in the region near Mathura, and the Kukuras and Vrisnis in Mathura. (See ibid., pp. 290-291, 288, 297, and 301).

There are obviously numerous gaps and anachronisms in this Puranic genealogical account if we consider it from the perspectives of either political history or historical anthropology. As a program of legitimation, however, it is clearly successful in bringing the Haihayas and Yadavas into the Aryan-Brahmanical system of hereditary ruling families alongside such less marginal lineages such as the Solar Dynasty of Ayodhya and the Paurava-Bharata-Kuru line: the former, the family of Rama, central to the Ramayana, and the latter, the lineage of its main protagonists, central to the Mahabharata. In practical terms, the genealogies thus validated all of the major ruling dynasties of northern India in ancient times no matter what their actual origins, and, more importantly for later Brahmins, provided a structure that could be extended to include almost any dynasty by claiming that it descended from one or another of the legitimated Solar or Lunar Dynasties -- as was in fact the case with the dynasties of Anga and Kalinga in eastern India, who claimed descent from the Lunar Anava line, and the Pandyas, Cholas, and Keralas in South India who claimed descent from Yadu's brother Turvasu.

In religious terms, and equally important, the genealogies legitimated the Yadava-Vrisni line that included Krisna and Balarama. Krisna and his elder brother first appear in the tradition as Vrisni heroes, and Krisna's role as a Yadava prince and friend/counselor to the Pandava prince Arjuna is a basic element

both in the Mahabharata story as a whole and in the Bhagavad-Gita episode. As a Yadava prince, Krisna was known from the Mahabharata onward as the ruler of Dwaraka in the Saurashtra Peninsula, and was linked to other Yadava lines by marriage to various of his eight wives: Rukmini, his first wife, was the daughter of the king of Vidarbha in the northern Deccan; Mitravinda was the granddaughter of the Bhoja princess Marisa and the daughter of Krisna's paternal aunt Rajadhidevi, sister of the kings of Avanti in Malwa; Nagnajiti or Satya was the daughter of the king of Kosala in the eastern Gangetic region; Madri was the daughter of the king of Madra in the Punjab; Bhadra was the daughter of Krisna's paternal aunt Srutakinthi and the king of Kekaya in the Punjab; and Satyabhama, Krisna's chief wife in the Mahabharata, was a Vrisni princess, daughter of Satrajit of Dwaraka. (See H. H. Wilson, ed. and trans., The Vishnu Purana: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition, pp. 456-457.)

Except for the absence of a wife from Mathura, Krisna's network of marriage alliances is almost an inventory of the territories associated with the Haihayas and Yadavas in Brahmanical genealogies. Krisna's two main wives, Rukmini and Satyabhama, come from the two most frequently mentioned territories: the Yadava kingdom of Vidarbha in the northern Deccan near the headwaters of the Wardha River, just east of the origin of the Tapti, and the Yadava kingdom at Dwaraka in the Saurashtra Peninsula, ascribed by the genealogies to the Haihaya-Yadava progenitor Yadu who captured it from the Raksasas. Between these two is the

Haihaya-Yadava kingdom of Avanti in Malwa, ruled traditionally from Ujjain/Avanti, which at times reached as far south as Mahismati on the Narmada and as far north as the Yamuna and Chambal valleys and Southeast Rajasthan. Mathura also enters the genealogical account, however, because of Krishna's kinship ties to its Vrisni ruling class: his mother Devaki is the sister of Ugnasena, the ruler of Mathura; his father serves as a minister to Ugnasena; and Krishna is the cousin of Ugnasena's son and usurper, Kamsa, whom Krishna kills in order to restore the throne to Ugnasena and free his parents from imprisonment -- an episode that is only briefly referred to in the Mahabharata (2. 13. 30-34 and 2. 38. 11) but that forms the climax of the story of Krishna's childhood in nearby Vrindavana told in the Harivamsa and later Puranas.

Looked at from the standpoint of geography, the three main places of Krishna's relationships -- Vidarbha, Dwaraka, and Mathura -- establish a triangle that includes the north-east portion of the Deccan, the Narmada River, Avanti, and Saurashtra in the south and extending northward through the Chambal valley and eastern Rajasthan to its apex at Mathura on the Yamuna, encompassing most of the territory associated with the Haihayas and Yadavas in the Brahmanical genealogies. We would expect the extensive pattern of relationships that Krishna does indeed have within this region, given the more general pattern of closely interwoven relationships between the main protagonists in the Mahabharata: the Pandavas and their Kaurava opponents are paternal cousins; Krishna's father is the maternal uncle of the three main Pandava princes; Krishna and Arjuna,

the leading warrior heroes of the Vrisnis and Pandavas respectively, are close companions; and Krisna's sister Subhadra is Arjuna's second wife, through whom is born the line that will rule the Pandava kingdom after the great war. Krisna's marriages, however, extended his relationships well beyond this central region, and reflect the larger pattern of Haihaya-Yadava contacts that we find in the genealogies of these two lineages overall -- i.e., in what the genealogists perceive as earlier times, before the great Mahabharata war and the beginning of the present Kali Yuga or "Age of Kali."

Krisna's marriage to a princess of Kosala, for example, reflects the long-standing Haihaya and Yadava involvement in that eastern region north of the Ganges beyond the Doab. The Yadava king Sasabindu, who is said to have ruled the territory from south of Kausambi (i.e., south of the eastern Doab) as far west as Rajasthan, married his daughter to the king of Ayodhya in Videha, northeast of Kosala. Bhadrasrenya, the son of the powerful Haihaya king Mahismant, is credited with conquering and ruling Benares/Kasi on the Ganges east of the Doab, which was at various times part of an expanded kingdom of Kosala. In the period after the rule of Mahismant's descendant Arjuna/Sahasrarjuna Kartavirya, Haihaya invasions of Ayodhya are said to have thrown the kingdom into disorder and decline until the rise of king Sagara, who expanded Ayodhya rule into regions to the west at the expense of the Haihayas. Haihayas and Yadavas alike were threatened by this advance, and it was in that context, the genealogists say, that the Yadava king Vidarbha gave his daughter in marriage to Sagara and went south to

establish the kingdom of Vidarbha in the northern Deccan. After Sagara's death, Vidarbha extended his power northward toward the Yamuna, where his son Kaisika established the kingdom of Chedi in the region between the Chambal and Ken rivers north of the Vindhya mountains. And, as a mark of continuing Yadava involvement in the eastern region, Krisna's maternal great-grandmother (Devaki's paternal grandmother) was a Kasi princess and his archrival Sisupala, whom he eventually killed, was king of Chedi through the marriage of Krisna's paternal aunt Srutasrava (Vasudeva's sister) to the previous Chedi ruler.

We need to remind ourselves as we read these accounts that their wealth of details is somewhat misleading. The genealogists who compiled them had little first-hand knowledge of the regions south of the Yamuna, and they had no maps to inform them of the topography and sites beyond the horizon of their restricted world in Aryavanta. Moreover, as far as we know, they had no historical records in the strict sense, but only legends, stories, and reports of people and places only loosely connected with any external chronology or overall sequential structure. These materials they had in abundance, as we know from the massive Mahabharata, and it was out of them and their concern to create order and meaning that they constructed their genealogical narrative to explain how things had come to be as they were, just as they engaged in endless classifications of rituals, deities, space, time, animals, plants, and the complex society in which they lived to create a meaningful order in which their place was secure. (For the extraordinary range and

degree of the latter efforts, see Brian K. Smith, Classifying the Universe, Oxford: 1994.)

There is no doubt that there was a very strong motivation to do this after the middle of the first millennium BCE. No Brahman who lived in northern India after that time could have been unaware of major changes taking place in the world around him. Urbanization had by then irreversibly altered the patterns of society, economics, and politics. Persian rule had been expanded into western India, and Magadha in the eastern Gangetic region was emerging under Bimbisara and his successors as a major power that threatened all of the region to its west both within Aryavarta and in the territory to its south between the Yamuna River and the valleys of the Son and Narmada beyond the Malwa Plateau and the Vindhya mountains. Politically, this new situation was marked in northern India by the concentration of power in a few emerging states and a decline in power of older more localized kingdoms and tribal republics.

Buddhist texts identify the Mahajanapadas or "great countries" that flourished shortly before the time of the Buddha (i.e., in the early sixth century BCE): Anga (south of the Ganges to the east of Magadha); Magadha (south of the Ganges just east of the Son); Kasi (north of the Ganges around the city of Benares/Kasi); Kosala (north of Kasi in the upper Rapti valley west of the Gandak River); Vriji or Vajji (a tribal confederacy, including the Videhans, north of Magadha across the Ganges between the Ganges and the Himalayas); the Mallas (a confederacy of tribal clans in the upper Gandak valley between Kosala on the west and Videha on the east, with its most

important center at Kusinara where the Buddha died); Vatsa (south of the Yamuna in the region around Kausambi); Chedi (west of Vatsa, between the Yamuna and the Vindhya highlands); Avanti (on the Malwa Plateau, with its capital at Ujjain); Assaka/Asmaka/Asvaka (in the upper Godavari valley in the Deccan); Surasena (the region around Mathura, on the western side of the Yamuna); Matsya (in Rajasthan, with its capital at Bairat); Panchala (in the heart of Aryavarta between the Himalayas and the Yamuna -Chambal confluence, divided by the Ganges into North Panchala with its capital at Ahickehhatra and South Panchala with its capital at Kampilya and a major center at Kanauj/Kanyakubja); Kuru (west of Panchala in the Doab, with its capital at Indraprastha near modern Delhi); Gandhara (near the Kabul juncture with the Indus, with its capital at Taxila/Takshasila); and Kamboja (north of Gandhara in the upper Indus valley). (See HCIP, Vol. II, The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 1-15.)

Besides the janapadas or states, Buddhist texts identify a number of significant clans or tribal republics in the eastern Gangetic region, some of them independent clans like the Buddha's native Sakyas and others such as the Lichchhavis at Vaisali and the Videhans at Naithila that were part of the Vrijjan confederacy. There are some differences even between various Buddhist lists, and both Jain lists and Panini's Astadhyayi omit some names and add others. Buddhists and Jains, whose movements began in the eastern Gangetic region, understandably provide more details about the political divisions east of the Doab than are found in Brahmanical genealogies, and they also are more specific about the states south

of the Yamuna. It is clear that the compilers of these various lists had different sources of information, often had different names for the same people or political units, and assembled their lists at different times and places. It is also clear that the situation they describe was very fluid, but that the changes taking place in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE throughout northern India had not yet erased the older pattern of numerous local political powers. The Sakyas and Kasi appear in the lists as independent entities, for example, though both were to be absorbed into Kosala by the end of the Buddha's lifetime, and Magadha appears as only one of the sixteen great states instead of the dominant power that it became by the early fifth century BCE during the reign of Bimbisara.

Given all of these factors, it seems certain that the Buddhist list of the Mahajanapadas does in fact reflect the conditions in northern India before the career of the Buddha and the reign of his contemporary Bimbisara of Magadha. By the end of the reign of Bimbisara's successor Ajatasatru (ca. 493-462 BCE), Magadha had conquered Anga to its east, had defeated an expanded Vrijian confederacy north of the Ganges that was supported by Kasi and Kosala, had absorbed Kasi and forced Kosala to withdraw back to its earlier northern territory, and was the sovereign power in the eastern Gangetic region. The only serious rival to Magadha by that time was the kingdom of Avanti in Malwa, which by then had apparently conquered or merged with the Vatsas and Chedis in the region between Malwa and Kausambi and thus controlled the territory south of the Yamuna from the Malwa Plateau to the eastern

end of the Doab and the border with Magadha. Within the next century, all of this Avanti territory had fallen to the westward expansion of Magadha and was part of the territorial base of the powerful Nanda dynasty (ca. 364-324 BCE) that preceded the Mauryans as rulers of Magadha. (See HCIP, Vol II, The Age of Imperial Unity, pp. 18-38.)

As this survey indicates, the political landscape characterized by the sixteen Mahajanapadas and the eastern tribal republics ceased to exist soon after the initial rise of Magadha under Bimbisara (ca. 544-493 BCE). Within a century, many of the older local states and tribal groups had been conquered and absorbed by either Magadha or Avanti and the "Sixteen Great States" had been effectively reduced to two. It is also the case, however, that a list that included Magadha among the great states could not have been formulated much earlier than Bimbisara. Bimbisara is the first ruler of Magadha named in the Buddhist Mahavainasa, although he is said in that text to have been anointed king by his own father, and it was Bimbisara who established the Magadhan capital at Rajagnika. The anonymity of the father and the achievements of his well-known son suggest that this was in fact the beginning of Magadha as a state, especially a state that could be numbered among the Mahajanapadas despite the obscure origin of its ruling family and its remote location south of the Ganges well beyond the eastern Doab and Aryavanta.

Even the Puranic genealogies, which typically project the origins of states into the far distant past, make Magadha a relatively late creation. It does not appear at all in the accounts of

early generations of the Lunar or Solar Dynasties, and is first mentioned some fourteen generations after Rama of Ayodhya as the inheritance of Brihadratha, eldest son of the Lunar ruler Vasu of the Paurava-Bharata-Kaurava line, whose other sons were given Kausambi and Chedi. Magadha is thus presented as a kingdom initially founded by the Pauravas, the most prestigious Lunar lineage, and the descendants of Brihadratha who form the Barhadratha dynasty of Magadha are seen as relatives of the Mahabharata's Kauravas and Pandavas through their common ancestor Kuru in the Paurava-Bharata line. This relationship is reaffirmed in the Mahabharata when Brihadratha's descendant Jarasandha, the ruler of Magadha some twelve generations later, is given a major role in the Krishna story as the father-in-law of Kamsa, who usurped the throne of Mathura from his father Ugnasena and was subsequently killed by Krishna. Resentful of the murder of his son-in-law and urged to revenge by his now widowed daughter, Jarasandha -- following up earlier threats -- invaded Aryavanta and attacked Mathura with the support of a number of other rulers including Krishna's paternal cousin Sisupala, king of Chedi through the marriage of Krishna's father's sister Srutasrava to the previous Chedi king.

The effects of Jarasandha's assaults are described by Krishna in the Mahabharata in the context of preparations for a Rajasuya (Royal Consecration) sacrifice for Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, which would establish him as a samraj or "all-king" to whom all other rulers would be submissive. (See J. A. B. van

Buitenen, The Mahabharata, Vol. II, "Introduction," p. 4.) This was a bold claim for Yudhishthira to make under the circumstances, because he was ruling at the time from his new capital at Indraprastha in the half-portion of his father's former kingdom that had been granted to the Pandavas by their blind uncle Dhritarastra, who became regent for his nephews when their father Pandu renounced the throne and retired to the forest. The grant of half the kingdom had been made reluctantly, because Dhritarastra's own eldest son, Duryadhana, wanted the whole kingdom for himself even though his father, being blind, could only serve as regent and he himself was younger than Pandu's rightful heir, Yudhishthira. Duryodhana's opposition had already led to an attempted assassination of the Pandavas and their semi-exile for several years before they were grudgingly given a wilderness tract as their half of the kingdom, and Duryodhana still aspired to gain everything for himself and his Kaurava brothers -- an aspiration that ultimately led to the Mahabharata war.

Moreover, as if this internal family conflict were not enough, even the claim to kingship by the family as a whole was somewhat dubious. The last king in the Paurava-Bharata-Kaurava line to rule straightforwardly -- i.e., by patrilineal descent and primogeniture -- was several generations before Dhritarastra and Pandu and their respective sets of sons, the Kauravas (one hundred sons, headed by Duryodhana) and the Pandavas (five sons, headed by Yudhishthira). The lineage is confused for several generations after the original founder of the Kaurava line, King Kuru, even in the Mahabharata's own accounts (cf. Mbh 1.89.43-55 and 1.90.40-49), but all of the

genealogies agree that the line eventually descends to King Pratipa, the great-grandfather of Dhritarastra and Pandu. Down to that point, despite some disagreement about names between Kuru and Pratipa, there are no basic issues of principle raised about succession. After Pratipa, however, the succession rights of male descendants become such a regular issue that van Buitenen believes "there is little doubt that the story was in part designed as a riddle" (Mahabharata, Vol. I, p. xvi).

According to Mahabharata 1.90.45-47, Pratipa married Sunanda of the Sibis (a Lunar dynasty tribe in western India) and had three sons. Devapi, the eldest, retired to the forest to practice austerities (or, as some accounts add, because he had a skin disease; see ibid., p. xviii), and his younger brother Samtanu thus became king when his father also retired to the forest. After he was king, but before he was married or had children, Samtanu was seduced by the personified goddess of the Ganges River, Ganga, who had earlier loved Pratipa in vain but had been promised that she could be his future daughter-in-law. Ganga had eight children by Samtanu, the first seven of whom she immediately threw into the Ganges to fulfill a vow that she would give birth to the eight divine Vasus who had been cursed to be born as humans and would then kill their mortal bodies to release them quickly from the curse. Samtanu refused to let the eighth child be killed, however, and so the child was raised by his mother and given as a young man to his father as his eldest living son and prince of the Pauravas -- initially named by the matronymic Gangeya or called Devavrata ("Divine Vow"), but

better known later as Bhisma, the uncle of Dhritarastra and Pandu and the wise elder counselor of the Kauravas and Pandavas in the ensuing Mahabharata conflict.

It was assumed that Gangeya/Bhisma, as Samtanu's eldest son, would inherit his father's throne. Four years after installing Bhisma as prince, however, Samtanu fell in love with Satyavati, the daughter of a fisherman chief, whose father would allow the king to marry her only if her offspring alone would become king and there would be no rival heirs. Bhisma, seeing Samtanu despondent over the conflict between his obligation to his princely first-born son and his love for Satyavati, went to Satyavati's fisherman father to ask for her hand in marriage for his father Samtanu, vowing to him that he not only renounced the kingdom for himself but that he would henceforth live as a celibate to avoid having sons who might compete with Satyavati's offspring. The arrangement and vow were accepted, Samtanu and Satyavati were duly married, and Bhisma remained as prince regent to aid his father and prepare the way for their future heirs.

Samtanu and Satyavati eventually had two sons, and after Samtanu's death the elder son, Citrangada, became his successor on the throne. Citrangada, however, was a dedicated warrior who spent his time and energy in battle, challenging and defeating "all champions, men and Asuras alike" (Mbh 1.95.7-8). When he finally met his match in a king of the Gandharvas (heavenly musicians and horsemen), he died unmarried and without offspring and with his younger brother Vicitravirya still too young to assume rule. Bhisma

therefore once again became regent, now with the urgent need to assure that at least one of Satyavati's offspring would perpetuate the royal line.

Once Vicitravirya had reached marriageable age, Bhishma applied himself to this new responsibility by abducting the three daughters of the king of Kasi/Benares as brides for his young ruler. The eldest daughter was released when she pleaded a prior attachment, but the two younger daughters, Ambika and Ambalika, were married to Vicitravirya. Bhishma's choice was clearly a good one from the standpoint of both the handsome king and his lovely brides, and Vicitravirya "whiled away with his wives" for the next seven years (Mbh 1.96.57). Unfortunately, he whiled away with too much vigor and too little result, for he died of sexual exhaustion after seven years without having fathered any children.

Succession was now in serious jeopardy. Bhishma's vow of celibacy still held, and he refused his widowed step-mother's plea that he father children by his half-brother's newly-widowed wives to save the family line. Breaking his oath would violate Dharma, he argues, and there was in any case another way to solve a problem such as this when the Law of Distress applied -- a way that had the sanction of Dharma and Brahmanical precedent alike. Such a situation had existed when Parasurama killed the Haihaya king Sahasrarjuna Kartavirya and all the Ksatriyas, leaving the Ksatriyas' wives as widows and threatening to end the Ksatriyas altogether. In this crisis, Brahmans "of stern spirits" planted their seed in the widows, who "kept their minds on Dharma as they lay with the

Brahmans" and brought forth a new generation of Ksatriya sons on the principle that "the son is his who took the hand." In this way, Bhisma concludes after citing further examples, "many other Ksatriyas adept at the bow were born by Brahmans," so Satyavati should now "invite a Brahman of virtue and let him father children on the fields of Vicitravirya." (See Mbh 1.98.1-1.99.2.)

Prompted by Bhisma's argument, Satyavati realized that she herself had the solution to her family's problem of succession. Just as Samtanu had had a son, Bhisma, before he married her, so she also, she confesses, had borne a son before she met and married Samtanu. That son had been conceived in a brief encounter when she was a young girl just past puberty plying a ferry across the Yamuna for her father. The "greatest of the upholders of Dharma, the great seer, wise Parasara" had engaged the ferry to cross the river. While they were crossing, the "great hermit, possessed by love," "overpowered and mastered me with his virility, right there in the boat, after covering the open spaces with darkness." In return for satisfying his desire, the seer Parasara had granted her the boon that after she had delivered the child on an island in the river she would still be a virgin. This "son I had as a virgin," Satyavati concludes, is now the great seer and yogin who is known as Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, "the blessed lord and seer who, by the power of his austerities, divided the Vedas and hence became in the world Vyasa the Divider," "a man who speaks the truth, an ascetic bent upon serenity, all of whose evil is burned away." This great seer had told her that she should think of him when a task needed to be done,

and this she now will do, she says, if Bhishma so wishes: "with your permission, Bhishma, the great ascetic will surely beget children on the fields of Vicitravirya" (Mbh 99.1.3-18).

Bhishma approves of this course as "both lawful and beneficial to our family." Krisna Dvaipayana is apparently considered a Brahman because his father Parasara was a Brahman and his mother Satyavati was an unmarried virgin whose hand had not yet been taken by another; her "field" was thus not owned by anyone before Parasara seized it to plant his seed, so the child is his as in the example Bhishma has just given of the sage Dirghatamas and his son Kaksivat who was fathered on a Sudra woman. At the same time, and somewhat inconsistently, Krisna Dvaipayana is also a brother of the deceased Vicitravirya through their common mother, as Bhishma is Vicitravirya's brother through their common father, and so he qualifies as a substitute seed-sower by the Law of Distress or "extremity" (apad).

The issue of "levirate marriage" or niyoga is discussed at some length in The Laws of Manu 9.58-63, where it is said that "when the line of descendants dies out, a woman who has been properly appointed should get the desired children from a brother-in-law or a co-feeding relative" (9.59), and the issue of ownership of children according to the principles of "field" and "seed" is discussed in a preceding section (Manu 9.31-56). Bhishma does not cite these texts specifically, but he (and the Mahabharata) clearly assume that the present situation of distress or extremity makes Satyavati's proposed use of Krisna Dvaipayana "lawful" by the same standards

that Manu uses. Krisna Dvaipayana is in any case doubly qualified, because he is not only the "brother-in-law" of Vicitravirya's widowed wives but also a great seer and ascetic for whose role in such crises there is separate historical precedence.

Satyavati, with Bhisma's approval, therefore "thinks of" Krisna Dvaipayana as he has told her to do and he immediately appears before them. Having explained the situation to him, she asks him to beget children on "the two wives of your younger brother, who are...yearning for sons according to Dharma" (Mbh 1.99.34-35). Krisna agrees to "do what is needed with respect to Dharma," but warns that both the queens must first "submit punctiliously to a vow" for an entire year to become sanctified before their union with him, "for no woman may lie with me without carrying out the vow." Satyavati, however, who has been described earlier as "hungrily begging for grandsons" (Mhb. 1.97.1 and 23-24), refuses to wait for a year and says that he must act right away to "plant the child."

Satyavati, as it soon turns out, should have taken her sage-son's advice more seriously and been less eager, because her pressure to have him act immediately has fateful long-term consequences for the dynasty. The first hint of what will happen comes with Vyasa's immediate response: "If I must give a child at once, before the appointed time, then her highest vow shall be that she bear with my ugliness. If she bears with my smell, my looks, my garb, and my body, Kausalya (i. e., Ambika of Kasi) shall straightway conceive a superior child" (Mbh 1.99.42-44). We are reminded by this that Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa is a forest hermit, yogi, and sage, not

a handsome and courtly prince like Vicitravirya with whom his wives happily spent seven years of passionate sexual enjoyment. Satyavati, however, intent upon the outcome of the impending union, fails to see the problem -- perhaps because Vyasa is her beloved and renowned son, perhaps because her own first sexual encounter was with his father Parasara who was also a hermit sage. Instead of passing on Vyasa's "highest vow" to her daughter-in-law or even warning her of who Vyasa is and what his appearance will be, she tells her only that her "brother-in-law" will come to her at night and give her a child. Hearing Satyavati's words, Ambika waits for the coming encounter in her "beautiful bed" with the lamps still burning, thinking to herself that she will soon be receiving "Bhimsa or any other of the bulls of the Kunus" (Mbh 100.1-4).

The "brother-in-law" that Ambika receives, of course, is not the familiar heroic warrior prince who single-handedly abducted her from her father's palace in Kasi through an army of angry suitors; it is instead her unknown other brother-in-law, the ascetic sage Krisṇa Dvaipayana Vyasa. Looking up in expectation from her bed, she saw "dark Krisṇa's matted orange hair, his fierce eyes, his reddish beard." She closed her eyes in shock and fear, and kept them closed while he performed his duty. When he left, he told his mother Satyavati that Ambika would now indeed bear a prince "with the vigor of a myriad elephant, a wise and great royal seer, of great fortune, great prowess, and great spirit, and he shall have a hundred powerful sons." Because of Ambika's "defect of virtue" in not

opening her eyes to look up at him, however, this noble son would be born blind. Thus was Dhritarastra conceived.

Realizing that a blind prince could not become king no matter what his other virtues, Satyavati then persuaded Ambalika, Vicitravirya's second widow, also to bear a son by her brother-in-law. Again, however, she failed to prepare her willing daughter-in-law for Krishna Dvaipayana's appearance, and the expectant queen "turned a sickly pale" when she saw the fearsome sage. The product of their union, Vyasa said, would thus be "a son of a sickly pallor" whose name would be "Pandu the Pale."

Dhritarastra, as predicted by his father, was born blind, and Pandu -- though otherwise "endowed with the marks of excellence" -- was born pale. Faced now with only one grandson eligible to rule as king, and that one marked with a sickly pallor, Satyavati decided to try once more for an unblemished successor to Vicitravirya. As soon as Ambika had recovered from the birth of Dhritarastra, her mother-in-law therefore ordered her to receive Vyasa a second time to conceive another child. Ambika, however, remembering "the appearance, and the smell, of the great seer," was incapable "from sheer fright" of doing what Satyavati demanded. At the appointed time, she accordingly decked a beautiful slave woman with her own jewelry and sent her to Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa in place of herself. Unlike the two queens, the slave woman rose to greet Vyasa when he entered the chamber and "served him with all honor" when he agreed to lie with her. Vyasa in turn "waxed content with the pleasure of love he found with her, and he spent all night with her as she

pleasured him." When he rose the next morning, he told her that she would cease to be a slave and would bear a son who would be mindful of Dharma and "the most sagacious man in the world." This child would be Vidura, destined to serve as the wise uncle and counselor to the Kaurava and Pandava sons of his two half-brothers. Vidura, however, was not eligible either to rule or to bear children who would rule because he was the "half-breed" product of a union of a Brahman and a slave and thus -- though born in the field of Vicitravirya" and the incarnation of God Dharma himself -- not entitled to the throne of a Ksatriya dynasty (Mbh 1.100).

The ceaseless efforts of Satyawati, the loyal support of Bhishma, and the essential seed of Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa, had now succeeded in saving the dynasty of the Kurus. Of the three sons produced to continue Vicitravirya's line, however, only one -- Pandu -- was eligible to take the throne in his own person. Dhritarastra himself could not be king because he was blind, although his potential offspring -- predicted by Vyasa to number a hundred sons -- would be qualified to rule. Vidura was out of the succession entirely, even though he was the only physically unblemished product of Vyasa's three unions, and could only serve as an honored observer of the drama soon to be played out within the family.

That drama, like the dramas that had preceded it, was of course centered around the issues of succession and rule. All went well while the young princes were growing up under the tutelage of Bhishma, whose continuing regency brought prosperity and good fortune to the Kuru kingdom. When Pandu was old enough to assume

the throne, Bhishma remained as his minister and took up the task of assuring that yet another generation of descendants would perpetuate the dynasty. To that end, he arranged the marriage of the blind Dhritarastra to Gandhari, the daughter of the king of Gandhara, and aided Pandu in acquiring two beautiful queens: Pritha, the sister of Krishna's father Vasudeva, known also as Kunti from her adoption by Vasudeva's cousin Kuntibhoja; and Madri, daughter of the king of the Madras in the Punjab.

Even with these favorable marriages, however, there were difficulties in providing children to continue the family line. Pandu, despite his pallor, had proved to be a great archer as a youth and had become a renowned warrior by the time he married. As soon as his marriage to Madri had been celebrated, he "decided to conquer the world" (Mbh, 1.105 7-8) and set off on a campaign of conquest that brought fame and wealth to his kingdom. Then, when he returned, having "won the luxury of leisure," he took his two wives with him into the forest to engage in an extended royal hunting expedition on the southern slopes of the Himalayas. There, on a fateful day, he came upon a buck mating with his doe and shot them both with "five swift, sharp, beautiful, fletched arrows with golden nocks" (Mbh 1.109. 5-9). Dying, still coupled with his doe, the buck revealed that he was a powerful ascetic who "had been consorting with his wife in the form of a deer" and accused Pandu of having been "overpowered by lust and greed" to kill him in that situation. Pandu defended his action on the grounds that "the ways of kings with deer is as it is with enemies: they kill them," but the buck replied that while kings

may kill deer according to Dharma, it is cruelty to kill one "at a time beneficent to all creatures and wanted by all creatures" (Mbh 1.109. 20). Pandu was then cursed to suffer the same fate that he had inflicted: "When you are lying with a woman you love, blinded by your passion, you too in that very same state will depart for the world of the dead" (Mhb 1.109. 27-28).

Pandu up to this point had shown much more interest in fighting and hunting than in making love to his wives, and whatever effort he had made had borne no fruit. Now he was under a penalty of death if he made love to either wife, and a complementary curse by the stag placed his wives in equal jeopardy: whoever was his partner in his final sexual union would, out of devotion, "fall under the power of the king of the dead" and follow him into death (Mhb 1.109. 29) -- a curse that de facto precluded even a suicidal one-shot attempt to conceive a child. Barred from further sexual activity, Pandu converted his hunting expedition in the forest into a celibate search for release as a forest-dwelling ascetic, living on roots and fruit in the Himalayas with his two loyal wives. Despite his austerities, however, he still despaired of reaching heaven because he would now die childless and thus could not satisfy the debt to his ancestors by sons and sraddhas (Mbh 1.111. 14-15).

Pandu's despair was partly relieved when ascetics whom they met on the way told him that he would have "godlike, beautiful, flawless offspring," which they could see with their divine eye, and he was further assured that "the fruit is in sight; make an effort" -- although he was not told what effort might be possible in light of

the curse (Mbh 1.111. 18-20). His first response was to ask Kunti to conceive a child by someone his equal or better, preferably "a Brahman of superior austerities," on the grounds that "the strict find offspring the first granter of the fruits of Dharma, even if born outside one's own seed" (Mbh 1.111. 30-36). Kunti demurred on the grounds both of her own faithfulness and the fact that no man on earth was greater than Pandu, but Pandu beseeched her to obey him who, "deprived of the power of progeny, is hungry for sons" (Mbh 1.113. 28-29).

At this point, Kunti -- much like Satvati before her in a similar situation -- remembered a promise she had been given in her youth by a great seer. She had been serving the guests of her adopted father Kuntibhoja, and her efforts had pleased a visiting Brahman. That guest, the awesome and irascible sage Durvasas, had given her "a spell combined with sorcery" and had told her that whatever god she called up with the spell would favor her with a son. "The word given by a Brahman is true," she now tells Pandu, "and the time for it has come. With your assent, I shall call up a god, sage king, by means of that spell, so that we, O lord, may have offspring. Which god shall I call?" (Mbh 1.113. 32-39)

Pandu, delighted by this news, tells her that she must act "this very day" to conceive a son, and asks that she call Dharma to unite with her both to assure that the child is seen as lawful and to provide a son who will "become a standard of Dharma for the Kurus" (Mbh 1.113. 39-45). What Pandu does not know, and Kunti does not at this point tell him, is that she has good reason to know that the

spell given to her by Durvasas works, because she tried it when she first received it. She was still an unmarried virgin at that time, but was curious, and had called up the Sun God Surya to test the power of her gift. Surya had in fact appeared, and had given her a son -- a consequence she apparently had not considered. To hide her misconduct and "out of fear of her relations" (for she was both *or suta?* Vasudeva's first-born child and Kuntibhoja's adopted daughter), she had thrown the child in the river and returned to her family as if nothing had happened.

Since Surya had restored Kunti's virginity when the child was born (as had happened also with Satyavati after Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa's birth), her youthful indiscretion remained a secret. The hearer/reader of the Mahabharata knows about it already, however, because the story has been told in the context of describing Kunti as Pandu's bride-to-be who chooses him from the host of suitors at her adopted father's svayamvara (the occasion for a Ksatriya's daughter to choose her own husband). There we have learned also that the son who was born was named Karna ("Ear," from the fact that he was born with shining earrings); that he was also already wearing armor when he was born; that Adhiratha, a suta (charioteer) for the royal family, had rescued the new-born baby from the river; that the infant Karna had been adopted and raised by Adhiratha and his wife Radha; and that he was destined to be a great warrior (Mbh 1.104). Later on, in Mahabharata 1.122 ff.) Karna will reenter the epic as a full-grown youth studying with Drona, the Brahman specialist in archery and the martial arts who comes to the court to teach the

Kaurava and Pandava princes and their entourage. By the end of this training, as Mahabharata 1.126-127 recounts, Karna will have become a major factor in the Kaurava-Pandava conflict as an ally of the eldest Kaurava prince, Duryodhana, and a bitter enemy of the Pandava prince Arjuna -- who was, unknown to either, Karna's half-brother by their common mother Kunti.

The Kaurava-Pandava conflict was of course still far in the future when Pandu asked Kunti to use her spell to grant him offspring. Pandu knew nothing about the earlier birth of Karna, and Kunti apparently knew nothing of what had happened to her child after she threw the new-born infant in the river. Duryodhana and the other sons of Dhritarastra and Gandhari had not yet been born, and the hoped-for Pandava sons had not yet been conceived. There was thus at the moment no concern about a conflict over succession; the question was whether there would be a succession at all. More particularly, for Pandu as reigning king, the question was whether there would be Pandava successors to maintain his own royal line. And whatever sons Dhritarastra might produce, the only hope for a Pandava succession now clearly depended not on Pandu himself but on the efficacy of Kunti's spell.

At Pandu's urging, Kunti therefore immediately put her spell to work by calling Dharma, Pandu's first choice among the gods, who united with her in his yogic body and gave her a son who would be known as Yudhisthira. In time, when this first son had been born, Pandu asked for a second son "of triumphant strength" and Kunti called up for that purpose Vayu, the Wind; the son of that union was

"the strong-armed Bhima whose prowess was terrifying" (Mbh 1.114. 8-12). Then, when Bhima had been born, Pandu asked for yet another son, this time from Indra, the king of the gods. For this more prestigious union, Pandu undertook to satisfy Indra with a year of "awesome austerities" and "enjoined on Kunti a holy, year-long vow," at the end of which Indra indicated his approval and Kunti called him to come and beget a son. This son was Arjuna, at whose birth a voice from the sky proclaimed that he would be a mighty hero who would remain undefeated in battle and "rescue the lost fortune," Indra and the celestials applauded, and "a mighty roar rose up wrapped in showers of flowers" as the gods assembled to honor the new-born babe (Mbh 1.114. 25-64).

Pandu, "greedy for more sons," was still not satisfied after the births of Yudhishthira, Bhima, and Arjuna, and asked Kunti to bear him yet another child. This she refused to do, on the grounds that Dharma did not allow a wife to bear more than three children by the seed of others even in times of distress: "After three she is loose, after four she is a harlot" (Mbh 1.114 65-67). Pandu's second wife Madri, however, complained to him that she felt left out not only because Kunti had now born him three sons but because she had learned that Gandhari had borne a hundred sons to his brother Dhritarastra. It would be a favor to her and a further blessing to himself, she said, if Pandu would ask Kunti to use the spell to help her also bear children. Pandu in turn appealed to a reluctant Kunti to "accomplish a most gracious feat" by bestowing children on Madri, for which she herself would "earn the highest fame," and Kunti

agreed to do so -- but only one time. She therefore told Madri to "think, for this once, of a deity, and of a certainty you shall have a child by him," and Madri -- "after much thought " -- "went out to the [twin] Asvins with her heart" and by them received two twin sons, Nakula and Sahadwa, "whose beauty was unmatched on earth" (Mbh 1.115. 1-22).

Pandu again appealed to Kunti on Madri's behalf, but this time she refused absolutely: "I said to her, 'for this once,' and she got two! I was deceived! I fear that she will best me. That is the way of women! I had not known, the more fool I, that by invoking two gods the fruit would be doubled. Therefore you shall no more charge me, that must be my favor from you!" (Mbh 1.115. 22-24). On this aggrieved note, the process of begetting offspring for Pandu ended.

Pandu had now assured the succession of his own royal line, albeit by unusual means, and had avoided so far the curse of the dying stag. He and his two wives remained in the forest with their five sons while the Pandava youths "grew up quickly like lotuses in a pond" (Mbh. 1.115. 28-29). One spring day, however, when the boys were still children, the stag got his revenge. Madri was wearing a sheer skirt as she and Pandu walked alone in the forest, "his lust grew like a brush fire" as he watched her, and against her frantic efforts he forced himself on her -- and died as soon as he entered her. Accused by Kunti of killing their husband, Madri denied that she had seduced Pandu, who had been "bent on proving his fate true," but chose nonetheless to die with him: "The king went to his death making love to me -- let this carcass of mine be burned with the

king's body that covers mine so well." Charging Kunti with the care of her twin sons, Madri then also died. (Mbh. 1.116)

Escorted by forest ascetics, Kunti returned to the Kuru capital of Hastinapura with the five Pandava children and the bodies of Pandu and Madri, which were duly cremated together on a funeral pyre under the direction of Pandu's uncle Bhishma and Vidura, his younger brother. With Pandu dead and the "half-breed" Vidura ineligible, de facto rule of the kingdom now reverted to Dhritarastra, Pandu's blind elder brother, who could only serve as regent until a son in the next generation was old enough to assume kingship. Sensing future trouble that would bring "a dreadful time," Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa urged his mother Satyawati to leave the capital and "live in the wilderness of austerities" with her daughters-in-law Ambika and Ambalika, the mothers of Dhritarastra and Pandu by Vyasa's seed, "lest you must witness the ruination of your own dynasty." The three women agreed and departed for the forest, where they "did awesome austerities" and eventually "shed their bodies...and went the great journey" (Mbh 1.119. 5-14).

The "dreadful time" predicted by Vyasa did not begin immediately, but its causes were in place by the time the three widows left. The underlying problem was succession, which learners/readers know by now is the Mahabharata's central theme, but this time the difficulty was not too few successors but too many. Pandu, aided by Kunti's spell, had assured the continuation of his own line with the births of Yudhishthira and the other Pandavas. But while Pandu and his two wives were in the forest, his elder

brother Dhritarastra and his wife Gandhari had also been active in an effort to produce sons. Gandhari was delighted when she became pregnant, hoping that she was bearing the first of the hundred sons promised to Dhritarastra and herself by Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa. After two years, however, she had still not given birth and became increasingly worried. At that point, she heard that Kunti had born a son "splendid like the morning sun," and her misery and pain led her to abort her fetus. "A mass of flesh came forth, like a dense hall of clotted blood," and she was ready to throw it out when Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa appeared and told her that this "mass of flesh" was the hundred sons she had been promised in his boon. Vyasa ordered a hundred pots set up filled with ghee (clarified butter), and when he sprinkled the ball with water "it fell apart into a hundred pieces, each an embryo the size of a thumb joint." These embryos he then put in the pots "in well-guarded places" with instructions to break them open at the proper time. (Mbh 1.107. 9-24)

The first child born from these pots was Duryodhana, whose birth coincided with that of Pandu's second son, Bhima, in the forest. As soon as his first son was born, Dhritarastra summoned Bhisma and Vidura and many Brahmins to inquire about the status of Duryodhana in the line of succession. He realized, he said, that Pandu's son Yudhishthira was "the eldest scion in our line" and that "he shall obtain the kingdom, and we shall not demure." But, he then asked, shall Duryodhana become king after Yudhishthira? (Mbh 1.107. 24-28)

The answer, it would seem, was unambiguously negative. As soon as Dhritarastra asked his question, "there was a sudden outcry on all horizons of gruesome beasts that feed on carrion and of jackals of unholy howls." Observing these "terrible portents everywhere," Vidura and the Brahmins predicted that "this son of yours will spell the death of the dynasty" and urged that he be abandoned for the sake of the family: "In abandoning him there is appeasement, great disaster in fostering him!" Let the other ninety-nine sons remain, they advised, but abandon this first son in order to secure "both the world and your dynasty." Thus spoke Vidura and all the Brahmins, "but the king did not do it, for he loved his son." (Mbh 1.107 28-34)

Duryodhana was therefore saved, despite the potents of doom, and became not only Dhritarastra's first son but also his favorite son. The other ninety-nine sons, and also a daughter, were born within a month, completing the full complement of the offspring of Dhritarastra known as the Kauravas -- a mark of their status as descendents in the line of the eldest brother in the Kuru lineage, distinguishing them from the Pandavas whose line was founded by the second brother, Pandu. After Pandu's death, when Kunti returned to Hastinapura with his sons, the Pandava and Kaurava children were raised together under the regency of Dhritarastra, the guidance of Bhishma and Vidura, and eventually the tutelage of Drona in the martial arts. There they were eventually joined by Karna, Kunti's premarital son by Surya (and thus the oldest of all the children, though not a family member), who became an ally of Duryodhana

against the Pandavas and especially against Arjuna, his unrecognized half-brother.

It was out of this heady mix of competing family lines and kinship rivalries that the subsequent conflicts in the Mahabharata emerged, leading eventually to the great war between the Kauravas and Pandavas and their respective allies over the throne of the Bharata-Kuru kingdom. The Mahabharata blames this war mainly on the greed and ill-will of Duryodhana, but there is no doubt that the underlying conflicts were made possible -- if not inevitable -- by what van Buitenen aptly calls the "riddle" of the right to succession over a period of generations. A summary of this riddle of succession, as told in more detail in the preceding account, brings out the central issues.

The problems of succession that bears on the central story begin with the offspring of Pratipa, a descendant of Kuru and the hereditary ruler in the Kuru line. Pratipa's eldest son Devapi, the legitimate heir, retires to the forest to practice austerities and has no offspring. Rule thus passes to the younger son Samtanu, whose eldest son Bhisma is the only surviving offspring of Samtanu's union with the goddess Ganga. Bhisma, however, gives up his right of succession as Samtanu's heir to the children of Samtanu's marriage with Satyawati, the daughter of a fisherman chief, and takes a vow of celibacy to avoid producing rival heirs. When Satyawati's two sons by Samtanu -- Citrangada and Vicitravirya -- die without producing offspring, Satyawati enlists the aid of her older premarital son Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa -- a Brahman, because his

father Parasura was a Brahman -- to beget sons on Vicitravirya's surviving widows Ambika and Ambalika. Blind Dhritarastra, begotten on the senior wife Ambika, is the elder of the two sons thus produced; Pandu "of sickly pallor" is the younger, begotten on Ambalika; and a third son, Vidura, is begotten by Vyasa on a servant woman outside the legitimate line of succession.

Pandu, the second son, becomes king because of his elder brother's blindness, but he himself can have no offspring because of a curse. His senior wife Kunti thus invokes a spell given to her by the Brahman sage Durvasas and calls on a series of gods who beget three Pandava sons on herself and two on her junior wife Madri. Dhritarastra's wife Gandhari meanwhile has been granted a boon by Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa that she will bear a hundred sons, but the foetus begotten in her by Dhritarastra was still unborn after two years. When she learns of the birth of Kunti's first son, Yudhishthira, Gandhari aborts the foetus and is about to throw it away when Vyasa rescues it, divides it into a hundred embryos, and installs the embryos in pots from which the hundred Kausava sons are eventually born -- the birth of the first, Duryodhana, coinciding with the birth of Kunti's second son Bhima. To complete the range of offspring, we learn also that Kunti has an earlier son, Karna, conceived on her by the sun god Surya when she first received her spell from Durvasas and was still an unmarried virgin.

This outline of the five generations from Pratipa to the Pandavas and Kauravas presents what van Buitenen describes, in a classic understatement, as a "geneologist's nightmare," especially

for a tradition that emphasizes the succession rights of the male descendants and gives inheritance priority to the eldest son in each generation. (See Mahabharata, Book I, "Introduction," pp. xvi-xviii.) Inheritance of the throne passed from Pratipa to Samtanu, the younger son, because the eldest son, Devapi, retired to the forest. Samtanu's eldest son Bhisma renounced the throne and vowed lifelong celibacy, so his succession passed to Samtanu's second and then third sons, Citrangada and Vicitravirya, neither of whom produced their own offspring. Vicitravirya's line was preserved after his death by his mother Satyawati's premarital son Vyasa, but the elder offspring of this effort, Dhritarastra, was born blind and could not rule. And finally, Dhritarastra's eldest son Duryodhana was conceived before Pandu's eldest son, Yudhishthira, but was born later than the senior Pandava because of his mother's long-delayed delivery. In every generation, it seems, there was one form or another of what van Buitenen calls the pattern of the "disqualified eldest" (*ibid.*, p. xviii).

Even more striking than this pattern, however, is the dependence of succession on the role of Brahmans. Samtanu's future wife, Satyawati, was seduced by the Brahman ascetic Parasara on her ferry when she was still an unmarried virgin. The child born from this encounter was Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa, whom Satyawati later called on to provide offspring for the widowed wives of her son Vicitravirya. Dhritarastra and Pandu, the sons conceived by Vyasa on these widows, were still legally princes in the Kuru line because their mothers represented "the field of Vicitravirya," but

biologically they were conceived by the seed of Vyasa, a Brahman, who himself was the son of the Brahman Parasura and the then fisherman's daughter Satyavati. In their case, as in the case of Vyasa, the question was whether their social and family identity was defined by the seed on the field, and in the case of Dhritarastra and Pandu the field had priority; in Vyasa's case, because his mother Satyavati at the time was not married and was thus not a "field" belonging to a husband, his father's seed had priority.

This was not an unambiguous issue, as is evident in the discussion of "field" and "seed" in The Laws of Manu, 9. 32-56, which begins with the statement that "they say a son belongs to the husband, but the revealed canon is divided in two about who the 'husband' is: some say that he is the begetter, others that he is the one who owns the field" (Manu 9. 32). In general, Manu gives priority to the field or the owner of the field instead of to the seed, but (in a situation not discussed by Manu) this seems not to hold in the Mahabharata in cases where the mother is unmarried and gives up her son, as the unmarried virgin Satyavati gave up her son Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa and the unmarried virgin Kunti gave up her son Karna. The case of Bhisma is also somewhat ambiguous, because although his mother (the goddess Ganga) was married to his father Samtanu (Mbh 1.92. 29-41), she left and took the infant Bhisma with her when he was born (Mbh 1.93. 42-44) and gave him to his father as a gift only when he was grown up (Mbh 1.94. 22-38). Perhaps Ganga, as a goddess, could not be a "field" belonging to a human husband, or perhaps -- since Bhisma was the incarnation of the sky-

god Dyaus (Mbh 1.93. 5-42) -- his father Samtanu's seed was irrelevant in light of the curse that doomed Dyaus and the seven other Vasus to be born as humans; both ideas are implied in Bhisma's alternative names of Gangadatta ("gift of Ganga") and Devavrata ("divine vow"), which suggest that Bhisma's birth had less to do with his father's seed than with Ganga's vow to give birth to the eight cursed Vasus and her gift of the eighth child, Bhisma, to his biological father Samtanu.

Given the remove in time and the various stages of revision and addition to the text, it is probably impossible to define precisely what these examples meant to the authors of the Mahabharata and what specific principles they reflect. There is no doubt, however, that they all present ambiguous issues of "field" and "seed," and that their effect is to add further complexity to the problem of succession within the Kuru dynasty. This is especially true of the two most problematic figures in the succession account: Bhisma, whose role extends across four generations from Samtanu to the count of Dhritarastra and Duryodhana, and who dies in the great war; and Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa, who assures the survival of the kingdom by conceiving the five Pandavas with his seed, helps the survivors of the war, and is credited in the text and in the tradition as the author of the Mahabharata itself. As van Buitenen points out, there is a "neat parallellism" in the "mirror effect" created by these two figures, one the premarital son of Samtanu and the other the premarital son of his wife Satyawati:

Thus in the grandfather generation there are two older extramarital sons on either parent's side, both unmarried, both deeply involved in the well-being of the dynasty. Bhishma provides protection to his younger half-brothers, and finds Vicitravirya his two wives; Dvaipayana sires sons on the widows of Vicitravirya. The mirror effect also brings out contrasts: Bhishma is chaste, a family man, and a baron [Ksatriya]; Dvaipayana is virile, ascetic, and a brahmin. Bhishma is until his very end a thoroughly visible potentate, whereas Dvaipayana moves secretly in and out. (Mahabharata, Vol. I, "Introduction," pp. xvii-xviii)

What van Buitenen does not say, but that is evident in the story, is that the dynasty's survival is aided less by its Ksatriya members than by Bhahmans: Parasara, who seduced Satyawati and produced Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa; Vyasa, who conceived sons on the widows of Vicitravirya and produced both Dhritarastra and Pandu; Durvasas the "awesome and dreadful Brahman of strict vows" who gave the youthful Kunti the spell by which she called the gods to impregnate herself and Madri with the five Pandava sons; and finally Vyasa again, rescuing Gandhari's aborted foetus and keeping the Kauravas' embryos safe until the hundred sons were born. One of the many ironies in the story is that Bhishma, the eldest son and expected heir of Samtanu contributed nothing biologically to the succession, nor did his two half-brothers who succeeded to the throne; biological paternity for the next generation depended entirely on their Brahman step-brother Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa. Put simply,

without this Brahman ascetic there would have been no Dhritarastra and Pandu, no Ksatriyas to rule the Kuru kingdom, no Duryodhana and his Kaurava brothers to dispute the throne with the Pandavas, and thus no war -- and, we might add, no Mahabharata, not only because the Kaurava-Pandava conflict and the war are the essential core of the epic plot, but because the Mahabharata itself is ascribed to none other than Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa.

Vyasa's "authorship" of the Mahabharata is no doubt largely symbolic, as van Buitenen notes, (Mbh., Vol. I, p. xxiii), but the ascription points to the major role of Brahmans in shaping the present text. That text, as it appears in the modern Critical Edition, is without doubt the product of a long process of gradual expansion, revision, and accretion over a period of many centuries. Van Buitenen suggests a starting point around the ninth or eighth century BCE for the original bardic epic, which reflected the conditions of early Aryan kingdom formation in the western and northern Ganges-Yamuna valley (i.e., in the region of the Doab closest to the earlier Aryan settlement in the Punjab). Even in its early form, this epic must have contained some 24,000 slokas (couplets), because the basic story line itself was already quite complex. [The family history just discussed, for example, from the founding of the Puru-Bharata-Kuru line through the death of Pandu, takes up only 30 of the 225 chapters of the first of the eighteen books of the epic, or only part of one of the hundred "minor books."] The text of the Critical Edition, however, which consists of the contents common to all of the major rescensions, contains some 100,000 slokas -- more than

four times the original length -- and reflects the expansions and additions made up to around 400 CE in the early Gupta Period, when the major text-making effort shifted to the creation of Puranas as the vehicle for new teaching.

It is clear from the contents of the completed Mahabharata that most of the expanded text is the work of Brahmins and that the final text is a Brahmanical product. The bardic epic is still there as the central plot, but it has been supplemented by stories and teachings that vastly expand the scope and message of the original. Many of these revisions are in the form of blocks of didactic material on dharma and doctrine, the most famous of which is the Bhagavad-gita (chapters 23-40 of Book VI), while others are stories or myths inserted to explain or elaborate on people and events in the story proper. With all of this, the story itself seems little altered in its main outlines and remains fixed in the historical setting of its origin: the early to middle first millennium BCE, at a time of crisis that will determine the fate of the Kuru kingdom at Hastinapura.

While the setting of the story itself has not been altered, however, the situation of its later Brahmin editors was very different from that of the bards who first laid out the heroic and tragic tale of warring cousins. The world of northern India was very different in the late first millennium BCE from what it had been earlier. Even before 500 BCE, the expanding urbanization of the Ganges-Yamuna valley had altered the earlier socio-economic base of Aryan tribal kingdoms, concentrating increasing wealth and power in a few dominant dynasties and leaving others to be absorbed by

their successful rivals. One effect of these changes was the disruption of many earlier Ksatriya lineages as former kingdoms disappeared and ruling families lost their claim to legitimacy, if not their existence altogether. But even more important in the long run was a related effect: the emergence within the Brahman class of a number of distinctively different value systems, ways of life, and roles within society.

The combination of these effects is reflected in the variety of Brahmanical texts produced in the first half of the first millennium BCE. Within the Vedas, the Brahmanas describe increasingly elaborate rituals to satisfy the desires of an affluent clientele for worldly rewards and a permanent place -- "immortality" or amṛta -- in the World of the Fathers, while the Upanisads warn against the transience of worldly possessions and the need to seek release by knowledge (jñāna) from worldly desires and attachments that bring rebirth even from the World of the Fathers. The Upanisadic seer Yajñavalkya teaches that one who knows the "self" (ātman) has no desire for sons, for wealth, or for worlds but becomes a hermit or ascetic (muni), "wandering forth" (parivraj) to live "the life of a mendicant (bhikṣa-carya)" (Bṛihadaranyaka Upaniṣad IV.4.22). However, beginning perhaps as early as 600 BCE (P. V. Kane, History of Dharma Sastra, Vol. II, p. xi), new Brahmanical texts known as Srauta-sutras, Grihya-sutras, and Dharma-sutras supplemented the earlier Brahmanas with extensive extra-Vedic teachings on ritual practice, social and religious duties, and the organization of society, emphasizing the central importance of householder life and

procreation in the context of a comprehensive system of duties for every member of society in accord with one's class and stage of life (the varnasrama-dharma system). (See Kane, op. cit., Vols. I-V.)

Obviously, Brahmans were moving in at least two different directions in the period after 800 BCE, both toward a more assertive role as the arbiters of social and ritual duties for householders, including kings, and away from social involvement in favor of renunciation as wandering mendicants, forest-dwellers, and seekers after desire-destroying knowledge. In addition to these two patterns, however, another type of Brahman is evident during this period and later: Brahmans who practiced rigorous ascetism and performed austerities not to achieve freedom from desire and liberating knowledge of the self but to gain personal power. The key concept in this effort is tapas, "heat," which is both the underlying creative energy of the cosmos and the creative power generated and focused by the fire sacrifice.

As Walter Kaelber has demonstrated (Tapta Manga: Ascetism and Initiation in Vedic India, esp. pp. 83-100), one of the major efforts in the early Upanisads was to separate the meaning of tapas as "brooding heat" from its more karma-oriented association with the external world-related fire sacrifice. The latter "lower" tapas is consistently rejected in the Upanisads, he argues, while the former "higher" tapas is identified with intensive meditation that leads to knowledge of Atman/Brahman -- which is, in its inherent nature, itself tapas and knowledge (ibid., pp. 91-92). The true or "higher" tapasvin, the one "characterized by tapas" in the Upanisadic

sense, is thus a person who has rejected the values and goals of the ritual fire sacrifice and who lives a quiet and peaceful life as a forest-dweller practicing the tapas or austerity of meditation and seeking the liberating knowledge (jñāna) of the self and its identity with Brahman.

Not all Brahman tapasvins, however, adopted the "higher" form of tapas emphasized in the Upanisads, or had the attainment of jñāna as their goal. Many instead practiced tapas of the sort described in the late Brahmanas and their associated Aranyakas or "Forest Books": an internalization of the sacrificial fires in order to continue the performance of sacrifices mentally in "the forest" -- i.e., away from settled society -- while maintaining a wandering way of life. (See Patrick Olivelle, "Samnyasa," in Encyclopedia of Religion Vol. 13, pp. 51-53.) This mental performance of the sacrifice involved the complete homologizing of the sacrifice and the individual, who thus became by interiorization identical with the sacrifice and the cosmos. Taken in the direction of the Upanisadic "brooding" tapas, this interiorization could lead to the search for knowledge by meditation. It could also, however, become an end in itself, in which case the tapasvin became effectively a mobile fire sacrifice endowed with all of the powers of a sacrifice to influence the devas and control the fundamental processes of nature.

Among the most important powers of the ascetic tapasvin was his control over fertility and fecundity. At one level, as Kaelber notes (Tapta Marga, pp. 15-27), this power was expressed in his ability to generate rain and ensure the fertility of fields; at the

homologous human level, it was expressed in the potency of his semen and his ability to ensure fecundity and procreation. There is an obvious similarity of these powers to those of holy men in other traditions, but the powers of the Brahmanical tapasvin were explicitly related to the fire sacrifice, the knowledge required for its performance, and the austerities mandated for one who acquired that knowledge. The Brahmanical model for the tapasvin was thus that of the Vedic student or brahmacarin who studied the Veda under a teacher for a period of years -- typically twelve -- during which he remained celibate and engaged in various ascetic vratas or vows such as fasting, prolonged silence, begging, and isolation in the forest (Kaelber, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-115). What distinguished the advanced tapasvin from the brahmacarin was that he typically did not marry and enter householder life, the setting for all Vedic rituals, at the end of his brahmacarya period; instead, he adopted a life outside the restraints and obligations of settled society as a wandering ascetic, maintaining his celibacy or "retention of semen" (urdhva-retas) as a means of increasing his internal tapas and his stored-up powers.

If such tapasvins of the "lower" sort were a problem for the Upanisadic seers, they were perhaps even more a problem for householder priests whose concern was for family continuity and procreation. Wandering ascetics had been a part of Indian life from early Vedic times, but the type of long-haired naked ascetic mentioned in Rig Veda 10.136, who "sails through the air" and "moves with the motion of wild beasts," was at best on the margins

of Aryan society. Efforts were clearly made over the centuries, however, to integrate ascetics and asceticism into the Vedic system and at the same time to "Vedicize" the ascetic way of life. The result was the assimilation of ascetic practices -- especially celibacy -- into the period of Vedic study (brahmacarya), and the parallel use of asceticism in the diksa or "initiatory consecration" of the sacrificer in preparation for the fire sacrifice (Kaelber, op. cit., pp. 109-124). Even after this assimilation, however, the life-long practice of celibacy and tapas-enhancing austerities remained as an alternative to householder life when the initial period of Vedic study ended, and one could in effect take up a permanent vocation as a brahmacarin -- though no longer under the supervision of a guru, but instead as a wandering tapasvin who had internalized his fires and become an independent center of power.

Ritual priests -- who were required to be married householders -- viewed this alternative as a threat to marriage and the goals of householdership, as is evident from Aitareya Brahmana 33.11: "What (use is there) of dirt, what use of antelope skin, what use of (growing) the beard, what is the use of tapas? O! Brahmanas! desire a son, he is a world that is to be highly praised" (Kane, History of Dharma Sastra, Vol. II, p. 420; see also Kaelber, op. cit., pp. 115-116). This challenge, too, was eventually brought under Brahmanical control by the creation of the system of four sequential asramas or "stages of life," but this again took centuries of effort. The basic principle of this system was that "forest dwelling" (vanaprastha) and "renunciation" (samnyasa) were not only valid but

necessary to further one's spiritual progress, but that neither should be undertaken until after one had completed Vedic study as a brahmacarin and -- most importantly -- had married and ensured the continuation of the male family line with sons who themselves produced sons. This view was introduced in Dharma Sutras produced in the latter centuries BCE, but it competed for some time with views set forth in other Dharma Sutras that allowed renunciation and life as a homeless wanderer (parivrajaka) as soon as one finished his study as a brahmacarin (Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-425). It was not until its adoption by the Laws of Manu near the end of the first millennium BCE that the system of four sequential asramas gained preeminence (though never complete victory), and the mandatory status of householder life and procreation was established as the norm for Brahmanical society.

It is evident from the chronology of this struggle that ritual householder priests were engaged in intense competition with independent forest-dwelling tapasvins throughout most of the first millennium BCE. This competition is barely visible in the Brahmanas, the Vedic ritual texts of the period, which seldom mention such tapasvins and then only in negative terms -- as in the statement from the Aitareya Brahmana (33.11, cited above) that the ascetic pursuit of tapas is useless and that Brahmins should instead desire sons to perpetuate the family. The Upanisadic seers, themselves forest-dwellers, are somewhat more positive about the renunciate way of life but see the knowledge of Brahman as the only goal that ensures release from rebirth. Chandogya Upanisad II.23.1,

for example, says that "there are three branches of Dharma: the first is sacrifice, study, and almsgiving/charity (dana) (i.e., the duties of a householder); the second is tapas (i.e., the activity of a forest-dweller); the third is that of a brahmacarin living in the house of his teacher and disciplining himself until death. All these attain the worlds of the virtuous; but one who stands firm in Brahman achieves the condition of immortality (amrta).\" (See Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 420.) Tapasvins in this Upanisadic view are thus virtuous to the same degree as householders and brahmacarins, but are also equally discredited because their goal does not bring the true immortality that is possible only from "standing in Brahman" by means of jñana.

Apart from such brief notices, none of the Vedic texts, either Brahmanas or Upanisads, gives the power-laden "lower" tapasvins serious attention. The same is not the case with Brahmanical texts such as the Dharma Sutras and the later Dharma Sastras that appeared alongside the Vedic scriptures after around 600 BCE, but their concern was to construct a social model and a set of regulations that would extend Brahmanical supervision and control over all of the varieties of homeless wanderers and ascetics -- not only the "lower" tapasvins, but also knowledge-seeking renunciates like the Upanisadic seers and any others who had abandoned household life to join the increasing number of sramanas in the forest. Their attitude toward tapasvins was thus essentially the same as that of the Brahmanas, except that instead of being dismissive of renunciation altogether they sought to include it

within a system that acknowledged the pursuit of jñana as a forest-dwelling renunciate to be the final goal of life -- but not a goal that should take precedence over fulfilling one's obligations as a householder. The proper sequence of a person's life was to be first a Vedic student (brahmacarin) and then a householder (grihastha) who sacrifices to the devas and produces sons; only when these two stages have been completed satisfactorily is one free to pursue the more personal and individual goal of final release as a forest-dweller (vanaprastha) or renounced person (samnyasin).

The authority usually cited to validate this system of sequential life stages (asramas) is the concept of "three debts," first set forth in Taittiriya Samhita VI.3.10.5: "Every Brahman when born is indebted in three debts: in brahmacarya to the sages (risis), in sacrifice to the gods (devas), and in offspring to the manes (pitrs). He indeed becomes free from debts who has a son, who sacrifices, and who dwells (with the teacher) as a brahmacarin." (Kane, Vol. II, p. 270). This verse was repeated and reinforced in Satapatha Brahmana I.7.2.11 and Aitareya Brahmana 33.1 (Kane, *op cit.*, pp. 560-561), and was central to Manu's argument that "when a man has paid his three debts, he may set his mind-and-heart (manas) on Freedom (moksa); but if he seeks Freedom when he has not paid the debts, he sinks down. When a man has studied the Veda in accordance with the rules, and has begotten sons in accordance with his duty, and sacrificed with sacrifices according to his ability, he may set his mind-and-heart on Freedom; but if a twice-born man seeks Freedom when he has not studied the Vedas, and has not

begotten progeny, and has not sacrificed with sacrifices, he sinks down" (The Laws of Manu, 6. 35-37). This position, moreover, not only mandates life as a householder after the celibate period of Vedic study (brahmacarya), but seems to validate only the final goal of freedom (maksa) from rebirth that can be achieved by the Upanisadic way of knowledge. This is made explicit in Manu's prescription that the forest-dweller must follow the rules of restraint and self-discipline required for diksa (consecration) and must follow as well "the various revealed canonical texts of the Upanisads" (Manu 6.29) in order "to increase learning and inner heat (tapas) and to clean the body (6.30). The man who seeks maksa, Manu adds, must "promise safety to all beings" (6.39), not cause "even an atom of danger to any living creature" (6.40), "never despise anyone" (6.47), "not respond with anger against someone who is angry, but speak a blessing when he is threatened" (6.48), and "should live here on earth seated in ecstatic contemplation of the soul (atman), indifferent, without any carnal desires, with the soul as his only companion and happiness as his goal" (6.49).

Manu's description of the person seeking moksa is an ideal portrayal of the "brooding" contemplative associated with the Upanisads, one who increases his learning and tapas (6.30) while leading a peaceful life of self-denial in the forest. Other types of tapasvins of the "lower" or power-oriented sort are not included as seekers of "Freedom," as Manu makes clear when it says that the moksa-oriented ascetic "with his hair, nails, and beard trimmed, carrying a begging bowl, a staff, and a water pot,...should wander

constantly, self-controlled and without oppressing any living being" (6.52). This differs from Manu's earlier description of the person just leaving householder life for the forest, who "should wear an animal skin or bark or rags" and "should always keep his hair matted and his beard, body hair, and nails (uncut)" (6.6) while he continues to study the Veda (6.8) and perform daily sacrifices in the three fires (6.9). Such a forest-dweller or vanaprastha, recently departed from the household, is still following the tapas-storing practices of the brahmacarin and the consecrated sacrificer (diksita), which include prohibitions against cutting the hair, beard, and nails that are "saturated with tapas" (Kaelber, op. cit., pp. 20-21 and 36). For Manu, however, this emphasis on physical tapas is a transitional stage which is to be superseded by that of the fully-renounced seeker after moksa -- the true samnyasin -- who abandons his fires, cuts his hair, beard, and nails, and concentrates his "higher" tapas on the mental effort that will bring release.

Manu's position, as noted earlier, is the end product of a long process evidenced in the earlier Dharma Sutras to bring renunciation and renunciates into the regulatory sphere of Brahmanical supervision and control. The procedure by which this was done was classically Brahmanical: to extend the principles of Dharma into the realm of renunciation, and to make renunciation "no longer external or peripheral to dharma...(but) one of its most important areas" (Olivelle, "Renouncer and Renunciation in the Dharmasastras," cited in Kaelber, op. cit., p. 119; see Kaelber, ibid., pp. 118-123.) The result was an effective -- though not complete -- resolution of the

centuries-long tension between celibate renunciation on the one hand and the sexual and ritual obligations of householder life on the other. This resolution was first and foremost a victory for householder priests, whose values and concerns were given the central place in the varnasrama-dharma system set forth by Manu, but it also had the effect of legitimizing renunciation in terms of Brahmanical values -- a legitimation, of course, that also brought the practice of renunciation and the renunciates themselves under Brahmanical supervision. As Kaelber points out, "Had the orthodox tradition permitted the sannyasin his asceticism, its victory would have been minimal; by making that asceticism obligatory, it won a victory of far greater proportion" (op. cit., p. 121).

One measure of Manu's victory is the limited place it gives to the matted-haired vanaprastha, the representative of the "lower" tapasvin, and the degree to which these forest-dwelling ascetics were given a Dharma that emphasized a peaceful way of life. The vanaprastha, according to Manu, should live simply on vegetables, roots, and fruit that grow naturally in the forest, and "should not eat anything grown from land tilled with a plough,...nor roots and fruits grown in a village, even if he is in distress (from hunger)" (Manu 6.17). Devoting himself to the private recitation of the Veda and making his sacrificial offerings "with various sorts of the pure food of hermits, or with vegetables, roots, and fruit, ritually prepared" (6.5), he should be controlled, friendly, and mentally composed; "he should always be a giver and a non-taker, compassionate to all living beings" (6.8).

Assuming that he had already satisfied his obligations as a householder, a forest-dweller who lived this simple hermit's life was certainly no threat to householder priests or to society in general. Manu's vanaprastha is in no sense a mobile fire sacrifice or a power-laden tapasvin, but a peaceful forest hermit who lives on natural foods, takes nothing for himself beyond bare subsistence, and treats all beings with compassion. The model for this forest-dweller is clearly not the traditional awe-inspiring ascetic of "fearsome vows" who is found in the Mahabharata and the earlier tradition, a tapasvin, whose tapas brings rain, whose tapas-laden seed conceives sons, and whose blessings and curses have an absolute power to bring fortune or misfortune to those who receive them. Manu's forest-dwelling tapasvin is instead a householder in transition toward final renunciation, a seeker after knowledge whose calmness, discipline, and self-restraint are a preparation for abandoning all attachments and entering the final stage of life, the asrama of the sannyasin or "renounced person" (Manu 6.33-85). In this stage, through the practice of meditation, "he should realize the destination of the individual soul [antaratman or 'inner soul'] through higher and lower living beings" (6.73) until, "through non-violence, lack of attachment of the sensory powers, Vedic rituals, and intense inner heat [tapas]" (6.75), he "reaches the eternal ultimate reality [Brahman]" (6.79) and is "absorbed right into the ultimate reality" (6.81). "A twice-born man who wanders as an ascetic after engaging in this sequence [of asramas and disciplines]," Manu concludes, "shakes off evil here on earth and reaches the highest Brahman" (6.85).

It is evident from Manu's discussion of the vanaprastha and sannyasa asramas that the earlier tapasvin/ascetic model has been largely superseded by a model based mainly on the tradition of Upanisadic seers. The older model of the ascetic Vedic student and the forest-dwelling tapasvin sacrificer has been partially preserved in the vanaprastha stage, but even this "lower" tapasvin -- despite his matted hair, untrimmed nails and beard, and tapas-enhancing practices -- has been assimilated into a more benign pattern that emphasizes peacefulness, self-control, and compassion. Generally speaking, we can say that there has been a significant shift in emphasis from power to benevolence, or from the "lower" sacrificial tapas to the "higher" tapas of Upanisadic "brooding" meditation and inner-directed knowledge of the self (atman). (See, for example, Kaelber, *op. cit.*, p. 146.) This shift, moreover, must represent a shift in Brahmanical values as a whole, because Manu's view of Dharma very soon became the normative Brahmanical teaching and maintained its authoritative position into the later Hindu tradition.

If we look ahead briefly at that later tradition, we can see that the older forms of power-oriented asceticism did not simply disappear as a result of Brahmanical efforts to reduce their role in the asrama system. Later "Hinduism" includes many forms of asceticism, not all of which fit Manu's regulations. Asceticism is often associated with Siva, whose basic mythology appears in the Mahabharata, and the earliest known Saivite cults in the centuries after Manu were ascetic movements whose practices differed radically from Brahmanical standards based on Manu's ascetic rules.

Numerous later ascetic movements, either directly or indirectly related to Siva, were often at best on the margins of Brahmanical society, and Sakta ascetics -- devotees of the Goddess as Sakti ("Power") -- were typically at odds with Brahmanical values. Wonder-working sadhus, both within and outside the Saivite tradition, are a staple of Indian culture down to modern times, and most of them are matted-haired ascetics of the early tapasvin type.

The use of tapas for personal power -- especially the acquisition of siddhis or supernormal powers -- is recognized as a temptation in most systems of yoga and meditation, and the numerous warnings against it are a measure of the degree to which the temptation was often not resisted. Tantrism, which uses the correspondence between the body and the cosmos to activate inner cosmic powers, may also be used either to attain moksa or to acquire siddhis, and Tantric adepts are commonly considered to be more interested in the latter than the former as a goal (see André Padoux, "Tantrism," in Encyclopedia of Religion 14:274-280). Some ascetic communities, both Tantric and non-Tantric, are much better known for their power than for their benevolence, and they often evoke the same awe and fear as the power-laden tapasvins of earlier times.

These examples suggest that Manu's effort to regulate asceticism was less than successful, and that the Brahmanical tradition failed to bring about a lasting change in the pattern of asceticism. This is no doubt true if we take the Hindu tradition as a whole, but it ignores the fact that the Dharma Sutras and Manu had a

much more limited goal: not to change the overall pattern of Indian religious life, or even of asceticism, but to regulate the pattern of those who had responsibility for preserving the Vedas and society -- primarily, of course, the Brahmins, who alone could teach the Vedas and transmit Vedic knowledge to successive generations, and whose rituals and knowledge were essential to the rulers who preserved social order. The effort that culminated in Manu was thus essentially aimed at ensuring that Vedic knowledge -- the gift of the risis, and the chief responsibility of Brahmins -- was used for the benefit of society and not for independent personal power outside society. Those who acquired this knowledge during their years as brahmacarins should therefore not immediately take this knowledge into the forest as wandering tapasvins intent on increasing their own power, no matter what its purpose; they should marry, produce offspring, perform sacrifices to the devas and sraddhas to their ancestors, and carry out their obligation to society. They should continue their study of the Veda to perform rituals for their families and others, should make sure that their sons were initiated into Vedic study, and should see that their sons were then in turn married and produced sons to continue the family line.

Only when these householder duties had been performed and the "Three Debts" paid to the risis, devas, and pitrs should a person finally take up life as a forest-dweller, and even then he should not forget about obligations to others. Despite his frugal diet of forest food, he should give alms of water, roots, and fruit to those who

come to his hermitage (Manu 6.7) and should make daily and seasonal sacrifices with "the pure food of hermits" (6.9-11). Most importantly, in terms of Manu's effort to replace ascetic power with benevolence, the forest-dweller should be "compassionate to all living beings" (6.8). No longer bound by obligations to his family or settled society, he now has a more universal obligation to avoid violence to any living being (6.60) and to "protect living creatures" (6.68), taking care to avoid even unintentional injury or death to living creatures as he walks along the ground (6.68-69).

There is little doubt that Manu's views were influenced by the example of Buddhist monks and Jain ascetics, both of whom emphasized compassion and ahimsa (non-injury) toward all living beings. These virtues, of course, were also consistent with the Upanisadic path of knowledge that Manu advocated for forest-dwellers (6.29), although the Upanisads themselves say little about the life of a forest-dweller. Yajnavalkya, the most important teacher in the early Upanisads, says in Brihadaranyaka Up. 4.4.22 that one who knows the great unborn self (atman) becomes a "silent sage" (muni), that those who desire only the self "wander forth" (parivraj-), and that those who have attained the self lead "the life of a mendicant" (bhiksa-carya); in 4.5.2, Yajnavalkya himself leaves his wives Maitreyi and Katyayani to "wander forth." Nothing more is said in the Upanisads, however, to describe how such a wandering mendicant or hermit should conduct himself, and it is clear that the Upanisadic seers were more concerned to pass down the ontological and metaphysical truths that they discovered than they were to

define or regulate their way of life in the manner of Buddhist monks or Jain ascetics. The regulation of forest life and asceticism in terms of prescriptive norms was left to later law-givers such as Manu, whose rules were based not on the Upanisads but on the concern of householder priests to place the values and activities of forest-dwelling renunciates under Brahmanical supervision.

Despite the undoubted influence of Buddhist and Jain renunciates, whose presence throughout North India was a long-established fact by the time of Manu, we nonetheless need not assume that Manu's prescriptions for forest-dwellers and sannyasins were taken directly from these non-Vedic traditions. Manu contains a number of parallels and paraphrases of passages from the Upanisads as well as the Bhagavad-Gita, and makes reference to numerous stories and examples from the Mahabharata. (For passages from the Upanisads and Gita found in Manu, see George C. O. Haas, "Appendix," in Robert Ernest Hume, ed. and trans., The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, pp. 516-562, which cites references to Manu for passages from Chandogya Up. 5.10.7 [Manu 12.55], Chandogya 6.3.1/Aitareya 5.3 [Manu 1.43-46], Katha 3.3-5 [Manu 2.88], Jsa 6/Bh. Gita 6.29 [Manu 12.91], Svetasvatara 3.2 [Manu 1.52, 57], Maitri 1.3 [Manu 6.62 and 6.76-77], Maitri 3.3 [Manu 12.12], Maitri 6.37 [Manu 3.76], Bh. Gita 3.13 [Manu 3.118], Bh. Gita 8.17 [Manu 1.73], and Bh. Gita 14.5-18 [Manu 12.24-40] -- to which should be added Bh. Gita 3.35 [Manu 6.66 and 10.97]; for Manu's references to the Mahabharata, see Manu 5.22, 7.40-42, 8.110, 9.23, 9.128-129, 9.314-315, 9.320-321, 10.72, 10.106, 10.108, and 11.241.) Whether

or not one assumes that Manu reflects a direct knowledge of all of these texts, the number and variety of parallel passages and ideas and the obvious expectation of familiarity and acceptance indicate that Manu was written at a time and in a context where both the Mahabharata and Upanisads had become part of the Brahmanical mainstream and could be used to support a new Brahmanical orthodoxy. Buddhists and Jains may have influenced this process, but by Manu's time the Brahmanical tradition itself contained values and concepts that could be used -- as Manu used them -- to offer a Brahmanical alternative to Buddhist and Jain views of both society and renunciation.

Manu's main concern is of course society, which is the topic of all but one of its twelve chapters, and even the single chapter that deals with renunciation -- chapter 6 -- concludes with a statement that "any or all" of the asramas, "adopted in succession by a Brahman who does what has just been explained in accordance with the teaching," will "lead him to the highest level of existence" (6.88). Of all the asramas, moreover, "the householder is said to be the best..., for he supports the other three. Just as all rivers and streams culminate in the ocean, even so people in all asramas culminate in the householder" (6.89-90). Twice-born men in all four asramas must "constantly and carefully fulfil their ten-point duty "that consists of patience, forgiveness, self-control, not stealing, purification, mastery of the sensory powers, wisdom, learning, truth, and lack of anger" (6.92); "those Brahmans who study the ten points of duty carefully and, after they have learnt it, follow it,

progress to the highest level of existence" (6.93). Such a person -- or at least such a Brahman -- need not even leave his household for the forest, but may renounce ritual actions after paying his "three debts" and "live happily under the control of his sons" (6.94-95); having renounced actions in this way, when he is "without longing" and "has struck down his guilt by means of his renunciation," he "attains the highest level of existence" (6.96). Progression to the forest-dweller stage is thus allowed, but is not essential, since even while living in the family household -- though without performing the duties or rituals of a non-renounced householder -- a Brahman can still achieve the highest goal.

Chapter 6 ends with the statement that "the meritorious four-fold duty of the priest [Brahman], which yields incorruptible fruits after death, has thus been explained to you" (6.97), leaving it ambiguous (and a subject for much later debate) whether the rules laid down for Vedic students (Chapter 2), householders (Chapters 3, 4, and 5), and forest-dwellers and sannyasins (Chapter 6) apply only to Brahmins or to members of all three upper varnas who have undergone Vedic initiation -- i.e., to all of the dvijas, or "twice-born members of society. More narrowly, and a subject of perhaps even greater debate, it is also left ambiguous whether the final asrama of sannyasa (renunciation, as distinguished from the less final forest-dwelling stage) is open only to Brahmins or can be adopted by other dvijas -- or even, as some later texts assert, by women and sudras also. (See Kane, History of Dharma Sastra, Vol. II, pp. 942-953 for the various arguments.)

If Manu is ambiguous on this question, however, it is not ambiguous about a special category of dvijas: those who rule as kings. Whether or not other non-Brahman dvijas should have renunciation as their goal, it is clear from Manu's discussion that this is not an appropriate goal for kings. As if to leave no doubt about this, Manu follows the chapter on Vedic students (2), the three chapters on householders (3-5), and the chapter on forest-dwellers and sannyasins (6) with two full chapters on the qualities and duties of kings (7 and 8) and sections in the next chapter on the punishments kings should administer for various crimes (9.221-312) and the relations between kings and Brahmins (9.313-322). The allocation of space is a clear indication of Manu's priorities, and the sequence is equally revealing: householders (especially householder Brahmins) and kings are the foundation of society; the former (especially Brahmins) may go on to be forest-dwellers and renunciates, but the latter may not. These points are underscored by the limited attention given to rules for Vaisyas and Sudras (only 10 verses, in 9.326-335), the statement that "rulers do not prosper without Brahmins, and Brahmins do not thrive without rulers" (9.322), and the prescription that "when a king has given Brahmins the wealth that comes from all fines, and has given up the kingdom to his son, he should go to his death in battle" (9.323). Society rests on Brahmins and kings, but for Manu they have very different roles and goals: Brahmins, who specialize in knowledge, may become renunciates, but kings, whose specialty is power, must literally die in the saddle, remaining householders and kings until their death -- which is, in a parallel sense, their final renunciation.

Kings, according to Manu, are not ordinary people. When the world was without a king and "people ran about in all directions out of fear," the Lord "emitted a king in order to guard this entire (realm)" (7.3), taking elements or qualities of various gods for that purpose. Because he is "made from particles of these lords of the gods" (7.5), a king should be considered "a great deity [devata] standing there in the form of a man" (7.8). To aid the king in his task, "the Lord [Brahman] in ancient times emitted the Rod of Punishment [danda], his own son, (the incarnation of) Dharma, to be the protector of all living beings" (7.14). With this Rod, the king inflicts punishment on those who deserve it: "The Rod alone chastises all the subjects, the Rod protects them, the Rod stays awake while they sleep; wise men know that justice is the Rod. Properly wielded, with due consideration, it makes all the subjects happy; but inflicted without due consideration, it destroys everything" (7.18-19). Using the Rod to save the weak from the strong (7.20) and destroy evil (7.25), the king should "uphold the right standards in his own realms and inflict severe punishment among his enemies, without bias toward his close friends and with patience towards Brahmins" (7.32). In this way, having conquered himself (7.34), the king can carry out the purpose of his creation: to be "the protector of the classes and the stages of life" (7.35).

Given his responsibility and power, the king should always act with discipline (vinaya), which he should learn from Brahmins (7.29). "From those who have the triple learning [of the Vedas] he should acquire the triple learning, the eternal science of politics and

punishment, philosophy, and the knowledge of the soul....Day and night he should make a great effort to conquer his sensory powers, for the man who has conquered his sensory powers is able to keep his subjects under his control" (7.43-44). Avoiding the vices that arise from anger and those that are born of anger (7.45-48), and conquering greed which is the root of both (7.49), he will go to heaven when he dies (7.53).

After a long discussion of guidelines for rule and the laws that a king should oversee (7.36-9.312), Manu concludes its section on kings with guidelines for how kings should treat Brahmins -- which is, in a word, "carefully." Citing a variety of examples from the Mahabharata, Manu makes clear that Brahmins have the power to create worlds, alter natural processes, and "make the gods non-gods" (9.315). Kings should therefore not, even "during the utmost extremity," make Brahmins angry, because an angry Brahmin can "instantly destroy [a king] with all his army and his vehicles" (9.313). A king may be a great deity as an incarnation of qualities of the gods (7.3-8), but the worlds and the gods themselves depend upon Brahmins (9.316). "A Brahmin is a great deity [devata] whether or not he is learned, just as fire is a great deity whether or not it is brought to the altar....Thus Brahmins should be revered in every way, even if they engage in all kinds of undesirable actions, for this is the supreme deity. If rulers become overbearing towards Brahmins in any way, the Brahmins should subdue them, for the rulers were born from Brahmins" (9.317, 319-320, referring in v. 320 both to Vedic views of creation and to the restoration of Ksatriyas by

Brahmans after Parasurama's effort to exterminate them, as a described in Mahabharata 1.98.4-7).

Matters should never, of course, come to such a showdown, because rulers and Brahmans need each other. "Rulers do not prosper without Brahmans, and Brahmans do not thrive without rulers; Brahmans and rulers closely united thrive here on earth and in the world beyond" (9.322). At one level, at least on earth, this is simply a pragmatic sociological truth as far as Brahmans are concerned: Brahmans cannot thrive without patronage, and the best patronage comes from kings. At another level, however, especially in conjunction with the preceding verses (9.313-321) and the claim that "rulers were born from Brahmans," the statement that "rulers do not prosper without Brahmans" is an affirmation of Brahmanical superiority that seems not to have the same pragmatic validity. It is evident that Brahmans would thrive best with royal patronage; it is not so evident why kings need Brahmans, or why they would grant them superiority. Is Manu's claim simply a pious sentiment based on mythological and ritual authority, or does it have a more solid historical foundation?

Brian Smith has argued, citing Louis Dumond, Jan Heesterman, and Francis Zimmerman among others, that Manu reflects and helps to assure a critical transformation in the Brahmanical tradition (Brian K. Smith, "Introduction," sections 3-5 of Part I, in Wendy Doniger, The Laws of Manu, pp. xxii-xliv; see also Louis Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus, Jan Heesterman's The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society, and Francis

Zimmerman's The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats). The earlier Vedic claims of Brahmanical superiority, Smith says, were based on Brahman's unique knowledge and performance of a priestly ritual that was "governed by values more often associated with a warrior class" (xxiii). In the Vedic ritual texts, he argues, "self-aggrandisement and dominance were unabashedly embraced and unashamedly displayed -- in the 'religious' sphere of ritual no less than in more 'secular' domains" (ibid.). The Vedic world-view assumed a "hierarchically ordered food chain" (xxiv) in which the strong devoured the weak, with the gods at the top of the eating order, and the fire sacrifice was seen as a way to control this process within "a ritual sphere that had as its climax the violent death of an animal victim" (xlvi). Only Brahmins had the "weapons" to "tame the powerful sacrifice" and use the "orchestrated sacrificial violence" to "elevate the sacrificer over his rivals and enemies -- goals most appealing to the warriors and rulers who patronized the sacrifice" (idem), and it was on the basis of these "weapons" -- the knowledge and performance of the sacrifice -- that Brahmins claimed superiority.

The problem with this claim, according to Smith, is that it was essentially a claim of greater power -- the power of Brahmins versus the power of Ksatriyas -- with no significant moral distinction between the claimants and their warrior competitors.

"The priests claims to supremacy, based on their control of a violent sacrifice directed toward the domination of others, were not those of a 'spiritual' over and against a 'temporal' power. Both priests and rulers manoeuvred in the same agonistic world. But the priestly authors of the Veda

represented their own speciality, the sacrificial ritual, as the ultimate weapon in society's version of the survival of the fittest." (ibid., p. xxx)

Claims of this sort, Smith argues, were increasingly challenged by "the revolutionary quality of other later and very non-Vedic ideas and practices that overturned earlier assumptions" (ibid., p. xxxi). Foremost among these new ideas and practices were vegetarianism and non-violence (ahimsa), which brought about a "reevaluation of all values" (p. xxx) and provided a new basis for Brahmanical claims to superiority: no longer only greater power, but now also purity based on adoption of the standards of non-violence and ahimsa (pp. xxx-xxv). Manu, in Smith's view, "marks a critical moment in the orthodox priestly tradition" as a priestly response to the crisis of traditional Aryan culture brought about by "orthodox" renouncers on the one hand and the success of Buddhists and Jains on the other -- one an internal challenge to earlier Vedic values, the other a threat to patronage (ibid., p. xxxv). Responding to the crisis, Manu is "an attempt at a reconsolidation of an already ancient heritage as well as a reorientation of that heritage around new 'principles of life' (dharmas)" (p. xxxv).

Manu's strategy, Smith claims, was to integrate renunciatory values with worldly concerns and, "most jarringly," to use "the teachings of those who despised the social world" as "templates for reorganizing the principles governing social rank" (p. xxxvi). Smith agrees with Dumont that "'purity' -- largely articulated in terms set by the world-renouncers -- replaced sacrificial skills as the mainstay in the priest's ideological arsenal," and argues that

"vegetarianism and non-violence became the principal signifiers of this 'purity' that jostled power, the new yardsticks for social ranking in the priestly and 'orthodox' reformation of Vedism documented in the dharma texts (p. xxxvi). The rationale for this new claim to higher ranking for the "purer" Brahmins was that vegetarianism is "the only way to liberate oneself from the bonds of natural violence that adversely affected one's karma," so that social hierarchy should be "governed to a large extent by the relative realization of the ideal of non-violence. The rank order of the social classes did not change. But the rationale for the ranking did" (p. xxxvii). given the social and political changes that had weakened support for the old Vedic ritual, priestly social precedence "may have become virtually indisputable only with the introduction of non-violence as the criterion for 'purity' and as the paradigmatic practice for social standing" (p. xxxviii).

The result of this "reevaluation of values," however, was -- in Smith's view -- the creation of a fundamental cleavage between the superior virtue of renunciation, as expressed in the purity of vegetarianism and ahimsa, and the therefore inferior value of worldly action that involved injury and killing:

"Nevertheless maintaining their high position in the caste hierarchy, second only to the priests, the warriors and rulers became categorically anomalous in light of their carnivorous bent and occupational commitment to violence. Henceforth, as Dumont and others have noted, 'purity' (defined in large part by how near one's mode of life approximated the ideal of non-violence) and power, manifest respectively in the figures of the priest and the ruler, were established as alternative and contradictory principles, with the former taking precedence over the latter in the theoretical hierarchical scheme of

things. Power was not entirely banished from society -- for the very good reason that it could not be -- but was, again, inferiorized in relation to priestly ideals." (*ibid.*, p. xxxix)

Manu thus, for Smith, "presents one of the finest examples in Indian literature of the insoluble contradiction between religious ideals (like non-violence) and secular reality (which always entails violence)" (p. xxxix). Manu is "caught in the universal paradox between 'what should be' and 'what is'," prescribing "an order of things guided by ideals that called upon humans to transcend the human condition (i.e., eat without killing), while at the same time presuming to be descriptive, realistic, and wise about actual human affairs" (pp. xxxix-xi). By trying to be both descriptive and prescriptive, Manu is "caught on the horns of a dilemma." "The priests may have thought it advantageous to throw in their lot with the renouncers, and indeed by doing so shored up considerably their claims to predominance by renegotiating the terms of social rank. The price, however, was the formulation of a social system whose principles were at war with themselves, and a religious system which constantly threatened to become irrelevant to the world in which most people lived, married, eked out a living, grew old, and died -- and killed, at every junction" (*ibid.*, p. xi).

Emphasis on purity and renunciation, however, did not entirely replace the earlier emphasis on Vedic knowledge and ritual power. "Thus, in addition to precedence claimed in terms of 'purity' based on non-violence, the priests continued to claim it on the grounds of their expertise in the knowledge and performance of an intrinsically violent ritual that was often explicitly directed towards aggressive

ends" (*ibid.*, p. xlii). This was justified in part by claiming that killing a sacrificial victim was not considered violence if it was sanctioned by Vedic injunctions (p. xlii). More importantly, however, the purpose of the sacrifice itself was redirected: "Instead of a weapon deployed against the hated other (one's 'enemy,' one's 'food'), certain sacrifices were reconstituted as expiations for the inevitable violence of the householder's everyday life" (p. xliii). Smith quotes Madeleine Biardeau's view that "the main point of the religious activity of the Brahmins amounts to a series of expiations" (Biardeau and Malamoud, *Le Sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne*, p. 42; Smith, *ibid.*, p. xliii), and concludes that "the priestly class could in this way maintain the older basis for social precedence (superior 'fire power,' so to say, by virtue of monopoly over the sacrifice) while shoring up their social status -- especially over and against the rulers -- with the exact opposite principle (superior 'purity' by virtue of non-violence)" (p. xliii).

Much of what Smith says about Manu itself is no doubt valid, although his interpretation of the motivation behind the text assumes primarily political reasons for Manu's claim of Brahmanical superiority. Wendy Doniger, who translated the text for the Penguin Classics edition, offers a partial rebuttal of Smith's assumption in her portion of the "Introduction" (Part II, pp. xlv-lxi). Without denying that Brahmins had a political motive for their claim, she points out that "Brahmins (like all the rest of us) have at least two agendas: they do have a political agenda, but they also have an intellectual agenda. The Laws of Manu may well have been inspired

in part by the desire to establish Brahmin status over physical force (Ksatriyas) and economic power (Vaisyas), but it was also inspired by the desire to solve the human, intellectual, psychological, logical problems of killing and eating, making love and dying" (*ibid.*, p. xlvii).

If the attempt to satisfy both of these goals involves Manu in contradiction and compromise, Doniger says, this does not prove Smith's assertion of "the ultimate failure of Manu to provide a code that can be realistically applied" (p. lviii). Manu does in fact state many specific exceptions to its general ideal rules, especially in circumstances of "distress" (apad), which leads Smith to conclude that "the whole system of vows of restoration, in addition to the counter-structure of apad, indicates that the system was designed primarily for people who disobeyed it" (p. lviii). But this, Doniger argues, "is neither irrational nor inconsistent; it is the assumption that underlies all systems of legal punishments and religious restorations, including our own" (p. lix). Manu is not, moreover, primarily a legal code in the sense of what we would call "law" (p. lxi); it is a statement of "the priestly vision of what human life should be" (p. lix), an "encyclopedic organization of human knowledge according to certain ideal goals, a religious world-view" (p. lxi). Whatever its contradictions, and however difficult it may be to reconcile its ideal goals and standards of purity with practical reality, it states a vision to which two millennia of Hindus have genuinely aspired (p. lix).

This discussion by Smith and Doniger may not settle the issues of whether Manu's claims of Brahmanical superiority are valid or

even logically based, or whether Manu's rules are consistent and/or realistic -- issues that in any case have not prevented the text from serving as the basic standard of Brahmanical society for over two thousand years. The discussion does, however, raise some important questions about Manu's views, especially its attitude toward renunciation and its position on the proper relationship between Brahmins and Ksatriyas --or, more specifically, Brahmins and kings.

Smith is undoubtedly right about Manu's pivotal place in the tradition, responding to a "critical moment in the orthodox priestly tradition" (*ibid.*, p. xxxv) with a synthesis of older Vedic principles and more recent -- and historically powerful -- concerns for non-injury, vegetarianism, and renunciation. He is also no doubt right that the resulting "reevaluation of values" was used by Brahmins to reinforce their claim to superiority, now not only in terms of their knowledge and practice of Vedic sacrifices but also on the basis of their greater purity as measured by their adaption of non-violence, their abstention from eating the meat of animals killed just to provide human food, and their greater commitment to the practice of asceticism and renunciation.

In his assessment of these issues, however, Smith relies mainly on a comparison of Manu with earlier Vedic ritual texts, which exaggerate the contrast he sees between Manu's adoption of the new values (non-violence, renunciation, and purity) and the older Vedic emphasis on violence and power. Manu was not, after all, written at a time when Vedic animal sacrifices were the only or even the major religious practice in the society, even among the

elite; it was written after the early Upanisads, after the rise of the Buddhist and Jain movements, and probably after Asoka. If we compared Manu not to older Vedic ritual texts but to the Upanisads and contemporary Buddhist and Jain texts, or to Asoka's edicts, we would find Manu's prescriptions even for Brahmins -- much less rulers -- at the opposite end of the violence/non-violence and purity/power scales. Manu in this context -- its own real historical context -- does not represent radical innovation but rather conservatism, trying to preserve the Vedic tradition and Brahmanical status in the face of major political/cultural/religious changes. By analogy, we might -- with apologies to Manu's Brahmanical authors -- compare Manu's message with that of Newt Gingrich and the Christian Right, calling out for a return to family values, harsher and more effective punishments for criminals, increased military power, and support for religion (our religion) as the foundation of society -- without, of course, government interference.

Such fantasies aside, we need to place Manu in a more secure historical setting than Smith and Doniger do, taking into account not only the earlier Vedic ritual tradition -- which was certainly an important continuing influence and a major concern for Manu's authors -- but also the centuries of change to which it was responding and the cultural situation that shaped its response. As usual with early Indian history, we have little direct historical evidence with which to construct this setting -- presumably around 200-100 BCE, at about the same time as the Bhagavad-Gita and just

after the collapse of the Mauryan Dynasty and the inception of Sunga rule. We do know, however, that the Upanisads -- certainly the early ones, and probably most of the major ones -- date from before the time of Manu. Manu is certainly later than the Persian conquest of western India under Darius in the late sixth century BCE and the concurrent rise and expansion of Magadha under Bimbisara (544-493 BCE) and Ajatasatru (493-462 BCE); almost certainly after Asoka; and most likely post-Mauryan, as evidenced by the reference in Manu 10.43 to Persians, Greeks, and Scythians -- and even Chinese! -- as "castes of the ruling class" that have "gradually sunk in the world to the rank of Sudras" by "failing to perform the rituals or to seek audience with Brahmans," and the reference in 10.47 to the "Magadhan caste" whose karma suits them only for trade -- one of the many "innate activities" that are "reviled by the twice-born" (10.46). One gets the clear sense that Manu stands at the end of a long history of disrespect for Brahmans, and that it considers it past time to restore Brahmans to their rightful place in society and to support kings who will see that this is done.

Manu was of course not the only attempt to achieve this goal. The Dharma Sutras preceded it by several centuries, and laid the foundation for Manu's success by developing rules of Dharma for the various asramas -- though not, as noted earlier, in a mandated sequence of "stages of life" (a meaning of asrama that strictly speaking applies only to Manu and later varnasrama-dharma systems that emphasized the "three debts" and obligatory householdership before forest-dwelling and/or renunciation). At least the early

portion of the Ramayana (Books II-VI) must be earlier than Manu, as is much of the Mahabharata (to which Manu makes numerous allusions), although probably not the theistic additions to the former (Books I and VII) and the long didactic passages in the latter -- especially those that make up most of Books 12 and 13, which together contain some 485 chapters with more than 20,000 verses, or roughly a fifth of the final Mahabharata text.

All of these were Brahmanical writings, if we include the post-bandic editing and insertions in the Mahabharata, and all of them assume a society in which Brahmins played a central role. Even the two epics, although the central figures are rulers, warriors, and their wives, contain numerous examples of Brahmins whose powers are essential to the Ksatriyas' success and family continuity. Manu thus had before it a range of Brahmanical models of what Brahmins should be and do and what place they should have in the social order: not only in the "agonistic" Vedic ritual texts that Smith emphasizes, where Brahmins were the agents or technicians of ritual violence, but in the *Srauta Sutras*, *Grihya Sutras*, and *Dharma Sutras* associated with the Vedic schools, in the *Aranyakas* and *Upanisads*, and -- perhaps most importantly -- in the non-Vedic (and thus more widely accessible) popular epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana. It was clearly not for lack of models that Manu was written, but out of a need to resolve the conflicts and contradictions in those available and to construct and/or synthesize a new model that would meet the needs of Manu's time -- a model that would define not only the role and qualities of Brahmins, but would

distinguish that role and the related qualities from those of Ksatriyas and other members of society.

The problem that the authors of Manu faced is evident when we look at the various portrayals of Brahmins in these texts. The Srauta Sutras and Grihya Sutras, as products of specialized schools of Vedic priests, emphasized the ritual role of Brahmins: the former in relation to the complex srauta sacrifices -- including soma sacrifices -- performed in some cases over a period of several days (and in a few, several years) in an elaborate sacrificial area with three fires and up to sixteen priestly specialists; the latter in relation to daily household rituals and the samskaras or "life cycle" rituals performed at various stages of a person's life from pre-conception through marriage and death. The Dharma Sutras, which also were products of the Vedic schools, expanded the topics covered in the Grihya Sutras to include the duties of all four varnas and the different asramas -- although, as noted earlier, they present the various asramas as alternatives and do not assume that a Brahmin will take up householder life prior to becoming a forest-dweller or a wandering mendicant (parivrajaka). The Vedic Aranyakas and Upanisads, however, which date from the same general period (ca. 800-300 BCE) as the Kalpa Sutras (the collective name for the Srauta, Grihya, and Dharma Sutras), gave almost no attention to householder life or ritual practices per se: the Aranyakas reflect the thought of forest-dwelling ascetic sacrificers who sought the inner meaning and symbolic truths of Vedic rituals -- whether physically or mentally performed -- as part of their

personal effort to increase tapas, while the Brahmans portrayed in the Upanisads are itinerant forest-dwellers seeking the knowledge (jñāna) that will bring release from rebirth.

As might be expected, the non-Vedic epics also gave little attention to the priestly duties of householder Brahmans. This is most obvious in the Ramayana, where almost all of the Brahmans of any importance to the story are forest-dwellers and/or ascetics: Valmiki, the ascetic poet and composer of the epic, who with his hermit wives gave sanctuary to the abandoned Sita and her sons in the forest; the hermit Visvamitra, who taught spells of power and mantra-controlled weaponry to the youthful Rama and his brother Lakshmana, in return for their protecting his seven-day sacrifice in a forest beset by demons (raksasas); the forest hermit Bharadvaja, who gave hospitality and a meal (a slaughtered bull) to Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana on their journey into exile; the hermit Atri, "one of the seven oldest sages in the three worlds," who with his wife Anasuya gave hospitality to the trio in the forest further along in their journey; the sage Agastya, who in ancient times had lowered the Vindhya hills to make them passable, who fed the trio a meal of edible flowers and roots in the forest and gave Rama a new divine bow and arrows to fight against demons; Sabari, widow of the hermit Matanga, who guided Rama and Lakshmana to the monkeys Hanuman and Sugriva to aid them in their search to bring back the kidnapped Sita; and the short-tempered Durvasas, a naked ascetic whose demand for food at the end of a long fast led Lakshmana to

violate Rama's promise of privacy to Time (Kala) and precipitated the end of Rama's reign.

Supplementary stories in the Ramayana introduce other Brahmans and sages such as Narada, Gautama, and Mandakarni of the same ascetic/hermit type and also the forest-dwelling Kasyapa, another of the seven ancient sages along with Atri, whose wife Kadru gave birth to the serpent Nagas and whose wife Vinata bore both Aruna, charioteer of Surya the Sun, and Garuda, the eagle who stole the nectar of immortality (amrita) from Indra's heaven. Although several of these sages had wives, none could be considered a householder in the normal sense and neither they nor the variety of forest hermits in the main story could serve as models for householder priests. The only possible candidate for this role among the main Ramayana characters is Vasistha, the traditional household priest (purohita) to the Solar Dynasty rulers of Ayodhya and the priest for both Rama's father Dasaratha and Rama himself. Vasistha, however, although married (to Arundhati), is presented more as a renunciate adviser and sage than as a family-centered ritualist -- a role that the Ramayana clearly does not emphasize. And while Rama's family line at Ayodhya at least has a household priest, Rama's royal father-in-law, King Janaka of Videha, is said to have gotten rid of "pretentious brahmana priests" (Buck, Ramayana, p. 57) by cursing them so that "their heads fell off and their brittle bones were stolen by thieves" (idem; see Brihadaranyaka Upanisad III. 6.1 and III. 7.1 and Chandogya Upanisad I. 8.6-8 for similar threats of heads falling off). In striking confirmation of this, the wedding of

Rama and Sita -- though attended by Vasistha and by Janaka's ascetic supporter Visvamitra -- was not a standard Vedic ritual but was performed by Janaka himself.

It is evident from this brief survey that the Ramayana would not have been much help to the Brahmanical program set forth in Manu, and Manu in fact gives no attention to the Ramayana apart from a single possible indirect reference to Visvamitra as an example of a Brahman "who, when angered, could create other worlds" (Manu 9.315) -- but the reference could just as well be to the story in Mahabharata 1.65.34-35 as it could to the Ramayana's similar story in 1.56-59. If the Ramayana was ignored by Manu, however, the Mahabharata was not, as the numerous citations previously noted clearly indicate. Whatever status or influence the Ramayana may have had by Manu's time and place, the Mahabharata must have been overwhelmingly more important to the authors' concerns as a popular and unambiguously Brahmanical text. Yet this must have presented in many ways an even more difficult problem, because Brahmanical though it might be, and useful as a source of examples, the Mahabharata also could not have been easily accommodated to Manu's program.

Despite its theoretical concern for society as a whole, Manu gives by far its greatest attention to the Dharma of Brahmins and kings. One chapter out of its total of twelve is devoted primarily to the Vedic student (Chapter 2), and one to the forest dweller and ascetic (Chapter 6), both from the context intended mainly for Brahmins; three chapters are devoted to the life of the householder

(Chapters 3-5), again with a focus mainly on Brahmans; and two chapters and a portion of a third are devoted to the Dharma of kings (Chapters 7 and 8, and verses 221-325 of Chapter 9). Brahmans and kings, it is made clear throughout the text, are the dual foundation of society; neither can prosper without the other, but together, "closely united," they can "thrive here on earth and in the world beyond" (Manu 9.322).

But if Brahmans and kings are both necessary to define, protect, and preserve the social order, they do not by that token have equal status. Even more clearly, they do not have the same Dharma. One of Manu's major concerns, in fact, was to reinforce the difference between the two varnas in terms of their separate roles and Dharmas, as is evidenced by the chapters dealing with royal Dharma alone. These chapters significantly come after the chapters on Vedic study, householdership, and renunciation that define the Dharma of Brahmans in particular and in principle of all members of the three upper varnas -- Brahmans, Ksatriyas/kings, and Vaisyas -- who become dvijas or "twice born" by initiation into Vedic study: i.e., the specifically Brahmanical principles of Dharma based on the values and practices of Brahmans as the exemplars of Vedic tradition and teachers of Vedic knowledge. Kings were expected to study the Vedas (Manu 7.43) and, as dvijas, to uphold Brahmanical values; protecting these values and the Brahmans who promoted them was one of their most important duties (7.23-35). As kings, however, their role was entirely different from that of Brahmans

and their Dharma was correspondingly quite distinct from that of all other members of society.

The king, as noted earlier, is symbolized by the Rod of Punishment (danda): "the Rod is the king and the man, he is the inflicter and he is the chastiser, traditionally regarded as the guarantor (pratibhu, the 'security' or 'bail') for the Dharma of the four stages of life" (7.17). As the chastiser, the king should "uphold the right standards in his own realms and inflict severe punishment among his enemies" (7.32); his "rod (danda) should be constantly erect, his manliness constantly displayed" (7.102), because "the whole universe trembles before (a king) whose rod is constantly erect" and "he should therefore subjugate all living beings by that very rod" (7.103). The ultimate form of chastisement, of course, is killing, and the king should not quail at the prospect: "Not turning back from battle, protecting subjects, and obedience to priests are the ultimate source of what is best for kings. Kings who try to kill one another in battle and fight to their utmost ability, never averting their faces, go to heaven" (7.88-89).

In Manu's view, warfare and killing -- and being killed -- have a ritual significance for kings that parallels the Vedic rituals for Brahmins. "There is no fault of inauspiciousness in kings or in people who are engaged in vows or extended sacrifices; for (kings) are seated on the throne of Indra, and (the others) are in the realm of the Veda. Instant purification [from contact with the dead] is ordained for a king on his noble throne, and the reason is that he is seated there in order to protect his subjects" (5.93-94). "When a

man is killed by upraised weapons in battle, in fulfilment of the duty of a ruler, instantly he completes both a sacrifice and the period of pollution (caused by his death). This is a fixed rule. A priest who has performed the rites (for the dead) is cleaned by touching water; a ruler (by touching) the animal that he rides and his weapons" (5.98-99a). Death in battle for a king, moreover, is not just a sacrifice in which he is the purified offering; it is also the proper end to a king's life, and thus his appropriate means of renunciation: "When a king has given the priests the wealth that comes from all fines, and has given up his kingdom to his son, he should go to his death in battle" (9.323).

Brian K. Smith, as noted earlier, argues that Manu reflects a shift in Brahmanical emphasis away from the violent "agnostic" Vedic fire sacrifice toward a new set of values based on purity and non-violence. A major effect of this shift, he argues, was that claims for the superiority of Brahmins after the times of Manu -- and to some extent also in Manu itself, though inconsistently -- were based on Brahmins' greater adherence to standards of purity, non-violence, and renunciation rather than on their control of the power-laden animal sacrifices of earlier times. Vedic knowledge remained essential to these claims in the new context as in the old, but was valued less as a means of attaining worldly power than as a basis for ritual expiation of karmic impurity and a means for achieving freedom from rebirth. (See Smith, "Introduction," Sections 3-5 of Part I, in Wendy Doniger's The Laws of Manu, pp. xxii-xliv.)

Smith sees this "revaluation of all values" as creating an "insoluble contradiction between religious ideals (like non-violence) and secular reality (which always entails violence)" (xxxix). Brahmins were able to maintain their claim to superiority, he says, by basing it on the new values of purity, renunciation, and non-violence, but only at the cost of establishing purity and power, "manifest respectively in the figures of the priest and the ruler," as "alternative and contradictory principles" (*idem*). The result, Smith claims, was "the formulation of a social system whose principles were at war with themselves, and a religious system which constantly threatened to become irrelevant to the world in which most people lived, married, eked out a living, grew old, and died -- and killed, at every juncture (xl).

Smith is no doubt right about the change of values reflected in Manu and the new basis for claims of Brahmanical superiority. Like many textualists, however, he largely ignores the historical/cultural context of this change and the real-life issues that were at stake for the authors of Manu. The "new order" that he describes certainly did reflect "a crisis in the role of the Brahmin as 'priest' (fulfilling his social function only at the risk of 'pollution' through contact with others)," but with equal certainty -- if we consider the historical context -- it did not result in "an absence of true legitimation for political rule, and a paradoxical conception of dharma, the 'principles of life'" (xl) -- a conception that was "paradoxical" because, in his view, "the fulfilment of the prescriptive side of dharma was mostly impossible" (*idem*). On the

contrary, given the historical situation, one might argue that Manu and its successors in the Dharma-sastra tradition created a new and more viable legitimation for kings within the framework of Brahmanical values, and at the same time saved Brahmanical dharma from losing out to competitive systems of dharma -- most notably Buddhist Dharma -- at a time when there were no longer traditional Aryan rulers to defend it.

Wendy Doniger herself, in the same "Introduction," raises objections to Smith's conclusions about the contradictions and practical impossibilities in Manu. Smith, she says, "has argued that the need for apad ['extremity,' or special rules for a situation when normal rules do not apply] is an indication of the ultimate failure of Manu to provide a code of human conduct that can be realistically applied" (lxiii), and that "the whole system of vows of restoration, in addition to the counter-structure of apad, indicates that the system was designed primarily for people who disobeyed it" (*idem*). But this, Doniger claims, "is neither irrational nor inconsistent; it is the assumption that underlies all systems of legal punishments and religious restorations, including our own" (lxiii-lx). Moreover, she says, "only a small part of Manu (Chapter 8 and a part of Chapter 9, which are generally regarded as late additions to the work) deals with what we would call law. The rest is a code of a very different sort, an encyclopedic organization of human knowledge according to certain ideal goals, a religious worldview" (lxi). In that sense, she says, "Hindus themselves have always taken Manu seriously in theory. In the realm of the ideal, Manu is the cornerstone of the

priestly vision of what human life should be, a vision to which Hindus have always paid lip-service and to which in many ways they still genuinely aspire" (lix). Like all sastras or teaching texts, she argues, Manu "influenced expectations, tastes, and judgements, beneath the level of direct application of given cases" and succeeded for centuries in simultaneously "mobilizing the insiders and convincing the outsiders that Brahmins really were superior, that status was more important than political or economic power" (lix).

Even this defense of Manu, however, is largely a textualist's defense, and it does not speak to the initial motivation or achievement of the authors in their historical context. Whatever contradictions, inconsistencies, or paradoxes may be found in the text, it would seem a sufficient argument for its success that it laid out a view of society that preserved Brahmanical culture and the authority of Brahmins for over two thousand years in the face of first Buddhist, then Muslim, and finally Christian opposition. But how was this view first established, and what did Manu's Brahmanical authors seek to achieve at the time the text was written? For this, we need to pay more attention to the historical circumstances at that time and also look more carefully at the entirety of Manu's teaching.

The major weakness in the views of both Smith and Doniger, apart from their ignoring historical context, is that they focus almost entirely on what Manu says about Brahmins and pay little attention to what is said about rulers. Over a quarter of the text of Manu, however, or some 750 of the 2,685 verses, is directly

concerned with the Dharma of kings: far more than is devoted either to the Vedic student (some 213 verses) or to forest-dwellers, ascetics, and other renunciates (some 97 verses), and even more than is devoted to householders in general (some 715 verses). Apart from this allocation of space, moreover, Manu makes clear that although Brahmins are ritually superior to kings and have greater intrinsic power by virtue of their knowledge of the Veda, they cannot prosper unless kings perform their proper role in society. Far from denying or undercutting the legitimacy of kings, as Smith claims (p. xi), Manu thus seeks to affirm both the legitimacy and importance of kings -- albeit on different grounds than those ascribed to Brahmins. Brahmins and kings are clearly complementary in Manu's model of society; to understand Manu's view of either, one therefore needs to understand its view of both and their relationship to each other. And one also needs, for something more than a purely textual understanding of Manu, to know what historical issues the authors were facing with regard to these two essential social classes.

A major issue raised by Smith, for example, is Manu's effort to dissociate Brahmins from involvement in violence and to justify the superiority of Brahmins in terms of purity, non-violence, and renunciation. This does not mean, however, as Smith claims, that Manu ignores the violence in society or sets up an unrealistic Dharma that denies the need for killing. On the contrary, as evidenced especially in the chapters on kingship, Manu acknowledges

not only the presence of violence but the importance of killing -- though not, except in very special circumstances, for Brahmans.

Performance of fire sacrifices that require the killing of animals is part of the Dharma of sacrificial priests, but killing of animals suitable for sacrifices -- in effect, all domestic animals -- should be strictly avoided except for religious purposes (Manu 5.37). Brahmans should thus avoid taking the life of any animal except for sacrificial offerings, in which case there is no negative consequence:

The Self-existent one himself created sacrificial animals for sacrifice; sacrifice is for the good of this whole (universe); and therefore killing in a sacrifice is not killing....On the occasion of offering the honey-mixture (to a guest), at a sacrifice, and in rituals in which the ancestors are the deities, and only in these circumstances, should sacrificial animals suffer violence, but not on any other occasion; this is what Manu has said....A twice-born person who is self-posessed should never commit violence that is not sanctioned by the Veda, whether he is living in (his own) home, or with a guru, or in the wilderness, not even in extremity. The violence to those that move and those that do not move which is sanctioned by the Veda and regulated by the official restraints -- that is known as non-violence, for the law comes from the Veda. Whoever does violence to harmless creatures out of a wish for his own happiness does not increase his happiness anywhere, neither when he is alive nor when he is dead....A man who does no violence to anything obtains, effortlessly, what he thinks about, what he does, and what he takes delight in. You can never get meat without violence to creatures with the breath of life, and the killing of creatures with the breath of life does not get you to heaven; therefore you should not eat meat." (Manu 5.39, 41, 43-45, 47-48)

As Brian Smith has shown in another context (Classifying the Universe, Oxford U. Press, 1994), the standard list of animals suitable for sacrifice (called pasus, the term also used in Manu) is a set of five domesticated animals: humans, horses, cattle, sheep, and goats -- or, since only male animals are sacrificed, men, stallions, bulls, rams, and he-goats. Of these, which are listed in descending hierarchical order, man is both the highest of all possible sacrificial animals and the sacrificial animal that encompasses all the rest. In one Vedic myth of origins, man is said to be closest to the creator Prajapati, identified with the sacrifice, and man thus possesses the supreme sacrificial quality (medha). This sacrificial quality was then passed down in descending order to the stallion, bull, ram, and he-goat and eventually into the earth, where it entered rice and barley. Rice is thus a pasu in the sense of having medha, the same sacrificial quality as the animals above it in the hierarchy (although, as a lower stage of transmission, a lesser amount), and rice cakes can therefore be offered as pasu in place of animals in a sacrifice if one wishes to avoid the killing of animals. (See Smith, Classifying the Universe, pp. 247-253.

Implicit in this hierarchical scheme is the assumption that a greater degree of medha signifies both greater potency and greater danger in the sacrificial context. There is no decisive evidence that human sacrifice was ever part of the Vedic ritual system in any period, although there has been substantial discussion of the issue (see Classifying the Universe), n. 24 on pp. 278-279, for a brief discussion and bibliography). There is no doubt, however, that at

least in theory the Vedic sacrificial tradition classified men as pasus (literally "bound," or suitable for sacrifice), and that the more elaborate Vedic rituals involving animal offerings and the construction of a piled brick fire altar (Agnicayana) required the placing of a golden image of a man beneath the first of the five layers of bricks along with the heads (either actual, or in the form of gold or clay replicas) of the five standard pasus: man, stallion, bull, ram, and he-goat. (See P. V. Kane, History of Dharmasastra, Vol. II, pp. 1246-1255.) Such sacrifices thus represented, even if only symbolically, a set of violent actions just to establish the sacrificial altar even before the subsequent animal sacrifices were performed.

Given this concentration of killing, both actual and symbolic, it is little wonder that the movement toward non-violence reflected in Manu would have struggled to rationalize the sacrificial violence ("killing in a sacrifice is not killing," as Manu 5.39 says) or to find less violent substitutions (rice cakes as pasus in place of animals, as Manu 5.37 allows) that would minimize or eliminate the actual killing. It is this effort that Smith discusses in his "Introduction" as leading to an "insoluble contradiction between religious ideals (like non-violence) and secular reality (which always entails violence)" (p. xxxix). Smith's statement, however, is misleading on two accounts: Manu does not try to eliminate violence from "religious ideals" as a whole, but only from the Dharma of Brahmins; and unlike Smith, Manu does not have the concept of a "secular reality." Society as a whole constitutes one body that is, from its

divine origin (cf. Manu 1.31), inherently religious, but not all members of society must have the same religious ideals. This is, in fact, the central assumption of Manu's varna system: Brahmans, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras came forth respectively from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of the Creator Purusa/Brahma (1.31), and each varna therefore has separate "innate activities" (karmans; 1.87) and a separate Dharma. As a body, society is an organic whole, but the different parts have different functions; the mouth (Brahmans) does not do what the arms (Ksatriyas/kings) do, and vice versa, and so the "religious ideals" of each must be correspondingly different.

Smith's description of the emerging ideal of non-violence for Brahmans thus gives only one part of a larger picture. The other part of that picture, to which Manu devotes more than two full chapters, is the Dharma for kings. This Dharma is no less religious than that for Brahmans, as Manu makes clear in its description of a king as having "a body made of the eight Guardians of the World" (5.96) or "made from particles of these lords of the gods" (7.5), listing in each case (though in different orders) the Lokapalas Indra (E), Agni (SE), Yama (S), Surya (SW), Varuna (W), Vayu (NW), Kubera (N), and Soma/Candra (NE). (See Banerjea, Development of Hindu Iconography, p. 520.) As the embodiment of these deities, the king "becomes" them "through his special power" (7.7) and is therefore not "just a human being" but "a great deity standing there in the form of a man" (7.8). The king is, as noted earlier, especially associated with the Rod of Punishment (danda), the incarnation of Justice (i.e., of Yama,

king of the dead and also King of Justice), and is "emitted" by the Lord (1.3) "to be the protector of all living beings" (1.14). The Dharma of such a king is thus certainly a "religious ideal" in the same sense as that of Brahmins, but it is a Dharma based on very different standards: not the ideal of non-violence, but rather that of punishment, violence, and killing.

Manu recognizes the presence of violence even in the lives of Brahmins as long as they remain householders and perform the rituals prescribed for householder priests. It is for this reason that twice-born householders are told not to kill animals or eat meat for any purpose that is not "sanctioned by the Veda" (5.43), because it is only ritually-prescribed violence that avoids karmic retribution under the principle that "killing in a sacrifice is not killing" (5.39). It is even better, however, to avoid violence altogether by becoming -- after completing one's householder duties -- a forest-dweller or renounced ascetic, "compassionate to all living beings" (6.8), "eating only roots and fruits" (6.25), and "doing no violence to living beings" (6.60). Manu's emphasis on this standard of non-violence does represent, as Smith rightly notes, the emergence of a new religious ideal for Brahmins that distances them as far as possible from the world-oriented violence of the earlier Vedic ritual tradition, and in that sense it sets a new standard for society in general and for the superiority of Brahmins in particular.

Society, however, cannot function without the use of violence to curb injustice, for otherwise "the stronger would roast the weaker like fish on a spit" and "everything would be upside down"

(7.20-21). As P. V. Kane has noted, Manu assumes (as does the more explicit Arthashastra) that society in the absence of punishment reverts to the condition of matsyanyaya, the "fish principle": i.e., that "big fish devour smaller fish" (Kane, History of Dharmasastra, Vol. III, p. 21). The king, in Manu's view (as also in the Arthashastra), is put here to prevent this by using the Rod of Punishment, inflicting just punishment on those who persist in behaving unjustly and ensuring that people do not swerve from their own Dharma (7.15-16). Upholding the right standards in his own realm and severely punishing his enemies, he protects the classes and stages of life and the Dharma appointed to each (7.32-35).

The Dharma of the king as thus defined is clearly a religious duty, and moreover one essential to ensure the religious duties of society as a whole. Equally clearly, however, it is not a religious duty based on the ideal of non-violence. On the contrary, violence is the essence of a king's duty, whether it be inflicting punishment on the unjust or waging war against his enemies. In sharp contrast to the ideal of non-violence it sets for Brahmans, Manu in fact seems to emphasize the violence and killing required of kings. "A king who inflicts punishment correctly thrives on the triple path [of dharma, kama, and artha; i.e., duty, pleasure, and worldly success]" (7.27), and "kings who try to kill one another in battle, never averting their faces, go to heaven" (7.89). Kings were not put here to be non-violent, Manu makes clear, either by their divine origin or their present birth; they were created and are legitimated precisely by

their innate karmic ability to punish, engage in violent action, and to kill.

Smith sees this radical departure from the ideal of non-violence as resulting in "an absence of true legitimation for political rule" (p. xl) because it is in such direct conflict with the values that support the claim of Brahmanical superiority. His argument seems to be that if Brahmans are superior because of their adherence to standards of purity and non-violence, then kings who have radically different standards cannot be legitimated by the same system of Dharma. But this is to miss Manu's point entirely, and to miss the underlying principle of the varnasrama-dharma system as a whole. It is true that Brahmans claim superiority on the basis of their purity and non-violence as well as on the basis of their Vedic knowledge, but this has nothing to do with the issue of legitimacy of kings.

Kings have a totally different role in society from that of Brahmans, and thus naturally -- at least for Manu -- have a different Dharma just as they have different innate qualities (karmans). This is the basic assumption of the varna system of different classes, to which Manu adds the further differentiation of asramas or stages of life. Brahmans have a different Dharma as celibate Vedic students from their Dharma as married procreative householders performing fire sacrifices, and their Dharma is different again when they become celibate forest-dwellers and finally renounced ascetics -- the latter being the only stage for which an absolute standard of non-violence is mandated. Kings, or those born into Ksatriya

families, may undergo a period of Vedic study as twice-born initiates, but this is primarily preparation for their role as householder warriors and rulers protecting the rest of society -- a role that necessarily involves violence and killing. For Manu, this is also the desired final stage of life for a king, who ideally should end his life not as a forest-dwelling renunciate but by giving his kingdom to his son and going to his death in battle (9.323).

Kings therefore have a very different social role from Brahmins, a different pattern of life, and a different ideal form of death -- in short, a different Dharma. Manu makes clear, however, that their role and their Dharma are essential to society, and offers probably the earliest justification for their legitimacy in the context of the new religious values of purity and non-violence. Not surprisingly, that justification is in terms of the same principles used to justify the mandated violence by Brahmins in performing the fire sacrifice: "sacrifice is for the good of this whole universe, and therefore killing in a sacrifice is not killing" (5.39), and "the violence to those that move and those that do not move which is sanctioned by the Veda and regulated by the official restraints -- that is known as non-violence, for the law comes from the Veda" (5.44).

Applying these principles to kings did not require a major transformation of their meaning. They had already been used to justify violence by Brahmins in the agnostic fire sacrifice where, as Smith points out, "the world-view that informs the...ritual seems to be governed by values more often associated with a warrior class"

(xxiii) such as "violence and power exercised over another" (xxiv). By Manu's time, or at least for Manu, these values were no longer considered appropriate for Brahmins. Rather than reject them altogether, however, Manu simply transferred the legitimation of these warrior-like qualities from Brahmins to kings, reducing the acceptable level of violence and warrior traits in the Dharma of Brahmins but affirming them in the Dharma of kings in much the same terms as were earlier used to legitimate violence by sacrificial priests.

"There is no fault of inauspiciousness in kings," Manu says, "or in people who are engaged in vows or extended sacrifices; for kings are seated on the throne of Indra, and the others are in the realm of the Veda. Instant purification is ordained for a king on his noble throne, and the reason is that he is seated there in order to protect his subjects....The king is inhabited by the Guardians of the World [the eight Lokapalas, or directional deities], and no pollution is ordained for him; for the pollution and purification of mortals are brought about and removed by the Guardians of the World. When a man is killed by upraised weapons in battle, in fulfilment of the duty of a ruler, instantly he completes both a sacrifice and the period of pollution (caused by his death)" (5.93-94, 97-98).

"In order to make Dharma succeed, he [the king] takes all forms again and again, taking into consideration realistically what is to be done, (his) power, and the time and place. The lotus goddess of Good Fortune (Sri Laksmi) resides in his favour, victory in his aggression, and death in his anger; for he is made of the brilliant energy of all (the gods). The man who is so deluded as to hate him will certainly be destroyed, for the king quickly makes up his mind to destroy him. Therefore no one should violate the justice [dharma] that the king dispenses for those that please him, nor the unpleasant justice [dharma] for those that displease him....Through fear of him all living beings, stationary and moving, allow themselves to be used and do not swerve from their own duty....The whole world is mastered by punishment, for an unpolluted man is hard to find. Through fear of punishment everything that moves allows

itself to be used....They say that a king is a (proper) inflicter of punishment when he speaks the truth, acts after due consideration, is wise, and is conversant with Dharma, Kama [pleasure], and Artha [worldly success]. A king who inflicts punishment correctly thrives on the triple path [of Dharma, Kama, and Artha], but if he is lustful, partial, and mean, he is destroyed by that very punishment." (7.10-13, 15, 26-27)

It is evident from these passages that Manu assigns a very important religious role to the king as the Rod of Punishment who protects Dharma and the social order. He sits on the throne of Indra, king of the gods, and embodies the eight World Guardians. In his role as king he is free of the pollution associated with death, and both the deaths he causes and his own death in battle are considered sacrifices. Like a Brahman performing a fire sacrifice ("killing in a sacrifice is not killing"), the king who performs violent acts as a means of punishment or kills in battle thus does not incur negative consequences. Inflicting punishment according to Dharma, he "thrives on the triple path" (7.27); killing others in battle, he goes to heaven (7.89).

If Manu parallels the roles of kings and sacrificial priests, however, there is a very important aspect of Dharma that the two varnas do not share in Manu's scheme: renunciation and the possibility of gaining moksa, "release" from further rebirth. Manu is clear that moksa can only be achieved by one who has become a wandering ascetic (parivrajaka) in the final stage of life, the asrama of renunciation (sannyasa). The text is less clear about who can take this final step, referring at times to a "twice-born" man and at other times only to a Brahman. Ultimately, however, and in

the most relevant passages, it is Brahmins to whom this final stage applies:

"When a man has paid his three debts, he may set his mind-and-heart [manas] on Freedom [moksa]; but if he seeks Freedom when he has not paid the debts, he sinks down. When a man has studied the Veda in accordance with the rules, and begotten sons in accordance with his duty, and sacrificed with sacrifices according to his ability, he may set his mind-and-heart on Freedom. But if a twice-born man seeks Freedom when he has not studied the Vedas, and has not begotten progeny, and has not sacrificed with sacrifices, he sinks down. When he has performed the sacrifice to the Lord of Creatures [Prajapati], in which he gives away all his possessions as the sacrificial gift, and he has transferred his (three sacrificial) fires within himself, a Brahmin may leave his house to wander as an ascetic." (6.35-38)

"Through the practice of meditation he should realize the destination of the individual soul [antaratman] through higher and lower living beings, which is hard for people with imperfect souls to understand. The man who has the ability to see correctly is not bound by the effects of his past actions, but the man who lacks this vision is caught up in the cycle of transmigration. Through non-violence, lack of attachment of the sensory powers, Vedic rituals, and intense inner heat [tapas] people achieve that place [the world of ultimate reality] here on earth....The entire subject of this discussion involves meditation, for no one who does not know about the soul enjoys the fruits of his rituals. He should constantly chant the Veda about the sacrifice, the one about the gods, and the one about the soul, which is set down at the end of the Veda. That is the refuge of those who do not know and of those who do know, of those who want to get to heaven and of those who long for the infinite. A twice-born man who wanders as an ascetic after engaging in this sequence shakes off evil here on earth and reaches the highest ultimate reality [Brahman]." (6.73-75, 82-85)

"There are two kinds of Vedic activity: the one that brings about engagement (in worldly action) and the rise of happiness, and the one that brings about disengagement (from worldly action) and the supreme good. The activity of engagement is

said to be driven by desire in this world and the world beyond; but the activity of disengagement is said to be free of desire and motivated by knowledge. The man who is thoroughly dedicated to the activity of engagement becomes equal to the gods; but the man who is dedicated to disengagement passes beyond the five elements. The man who sacrifices to the self [atman], equally seeing the self in all living beings and all living beings in the self, becomes independent. A Brahman should give up even the activities described above and devote himself diligently to the knowledge of the self, to tranquillity, and to the recitation of the Veda. For that is what makes a birth fruitful, especially for a Brahman; by attaining that, and in no other way, a twice-born man has done what has to be done." (12.88-93)

As these passages indicate, Manu alternates the terms "twice-born man" and "Brahman" in a rather ambiguous way, leaving it uncertain whether the final stage of renunciation (sannyasa) as a wandering ascetic is intended for all of the three classes (varnas) of twice-born or only for the Brahman class. What is not ambiguous, however, is the exclusion of kings from the process of renunciation described in the sixth chapter of Manu. The final verse of that chapter makes this explicit with the statement that "the meritorious four-fold duty of the Brahman, which yields incorruptible fruits after death, has now been explained to you; now learn the duties of kings" (6.97). The three chapters that follow on "the duties of kings" (raja-dharma) make no mention of the "four-fold duty" associated with the four successive asramas or "stages of life" laid out in the previous chapters (the Vedic Student in Chapter Two, the Householder in Three through Five, and the Forest-Dweller and Renunciate in Six), but assume that a king will remain a householder throughout his adult life and will ideally "go to his

death in battle" (9.323). The king thus epitomizes the person "thoroughly dedicated to the activity of engagement" (12.90) in Manu's discussion of the "two kinds of Vedic activity" (12.88-90), paralleling priests who remain attached to the worldly rewards of the fire sacrifice. There is virtue in this, and happiness, and one may even by such activity become "equal to the gods" (12.90), but there is no escape in this way from rebirth; there is heaven, but no moksa.

It is no doubt for this reason that Manu says about a king who "inflicts punishment correctly" that he "thrives on the triple path" (7.27) -- i.e., in the areas of dharma, kama, and artha (duty, pleasure, and worldly success) with which a king should be conversant (7.26, 7.151, 8.24). These three components of the "triple path" (trivarga, literally the "three categories") appear together a number of times in Manu as a summary of the main concerns of worldly life, and are identified also as the "distinguishing marks" (lakṣaṇas) of the three qualities or gunas that make up both the phenomenal world (1.14-15) and the self (atman) "through which the great one (mahat) pervades and endures in all these existences, without exception" (12.24).

Manu's version of the Samkhya philosophy differs from the later standard system by listing the self (atman) as one of the evolutes of the gunas and mahat instead of placing it outside the realm of the three gunas as does, for example, the Bhagavad-gita, but otherwise -- a very big otherwise, as we will see -- it views the gunas and their properties in much the same way:

"Know that lucidity [sattva], energy [rajas], and darkness [tamas] are the three qualities of the self [atman], through which the great one [mahat] pervades and endures in all these existences, without exception. Whenever one of these qualities entirely prevails in a body, it makes the particular quality predominant in the embodied (soul). Lucidity [sattva] is traditionally regarded as knowledge, darkness [tamas] as ignorance, and energy [rajas] as passion and hate; this is their form, that enters and pervades all living beings. Among these (three), a person should recognize as lucidity whatever he perceives in his self as full of joy, something of pure light which seems to be entirely at peace. But he should recognize as energy whatever is full of unhappiness and gives his self no joy, something which is hard to oppose and constantly seduces embodied creatures. And he should recognize as darkness whatever is full of confusion, undifferentiated, whatever is sensual and cannot be understood through reason or intelligence." (12.24-29)

Each of these gunas has particular fruits, which Manu spells out in 12.30-33, and each has specific marks [laksanas], which Manu summarizes with the statement that "pleasure [kama] is the mark of darkness [tamas], profit [artha] is said to be the mark of energy [rajas], and religion [dharma, 'duty'] the mark of lucidity [sattva], and each is better than the one before it" (12.38). Each guna also affects "the transmigrations in this whole (universe) that one achieves" (12.39), each of which is described in detail ranging from "the highest level of existence to which lucidity [sattva] leads" (Brahma, the creators of the whole universe, religion [dharma], the great one [mahat] and the unmanifest) (12.50) to the "terrible hells [marakas]" and dreadful rebirths that result from violence, lust, theft, delinquency in following one's Dharma, and ignorance (12.55-81). As to what is "the supreme good for a Brahman" (12.82), Manu is quite specific:

"The recitation of the Veda, inner heat [tapas], knowledge, the repression of the sensory powers, non-violence, and serving the guru bring about the supreme good. But of all these auspicious activities here on earth, is one activity said to be best able to bring about the supreme good for a man? The knowledge of the self [atman] is traditionally regarded as the ultimate of all of these; it is the first of all forms of learning because through it immortality is achieved....Concentrating his mind, a man should see everything, including what is real and unreal, in the self [atman], for if he sees everything in the self he will not set his mind on what is wrong. The self alone is all the deities; everything rests upon the self; for the self engenders the performance of the activities of these embodied creatures....Whoever thus sees the self through the self in all living beings achieves equanimity towards all of them and reaches the supreme condition, ultimate reality [Brahman]" (12.83-85, 118-119, 125)

What is identified here as "the supreme goal of a Brahman" (12.82) corresponds exactly to the goal described earlier in 6.33-85 for a Brahman who has abandoned all attachments and wanders as an ascetic in the fourth and final asrama (6.33). Such a man, Manu says, having paid his three debts, "may set his mind-and-heart on Freedom (maksa, 'release')" (6.35). By "obstructing his sensory powers, destroying passion and hatred, and doing no violence to living beings, he becomes fit for immortality" (6.60), and through the practice of meditation he "should realize the destination of the individual soul through higher and lower living beings, which is hard for people with imperfect souls to understand" (6.73). Eventually, "through non-violence, lack of attachment to sensory powers, Vedic rituals, and intense inner heat [tapas]" (6.75), the seeker after moksa "reaches the eternal ultimate reality through the practice of meditation" (6.79), is "absorbed right into the ultimate reality" (6.81), and,

knowing the soul (6.82), "shakes off evil here on earth and reaches the highest ultimate reality [Brahman]" (6.85).

This final goal is not called moksa anywhere else in Manu, and the term appears in Chapter Six only in the discussion of the final stage of life, the asrama of the sannyasin or renounced ascetic. The "supreme goal of a Brahman" is not identified as moksa in Chapter Twelve, despite its apparent identity with the moksa described in Chapter Six, and the term moksa therefore never appears in Manu in the same context as the trivarga, the "triple path" or "three categories" of kama, artha, and dharma. Whatever else this may indicate, it is clear evidence that the authors of Manu either did not know or did not approve of the concept of the four purusarthas or "goals of man" -- kama, artha, dharma and moksa -- that became a standard designation of the legitimate goals of an integrated human life in later Dharmasastras and the didactic portions of the epics. Manu in this case reflects the older and more traditional viewpoint of householder Brahmins for whom the trivarga represented the important concerns of life that centered around Vedic study, marriage, procreation, social and family duty, sacrificial rituals, worldly success, and an afterlife in the World of the Fathers. From that perspective, the pursuit of release from rebirth by means of renunciation was legitimate in the sense that it had Vedic sanction in the Upanisads, but it was a secondary concern and should be sharply restricted in access. Put simply, moksa did not have the same importance as the essential concerns of life represented by the trivarga of kama, artha, and dharma.

Scholars have often noted the opposition between householder and renunciate values in the early Dharmasastras such as Manu and the related dichotomy between moksa and the trivarga. See, for example, Alf Hiltebeitel, "Hinduism," in E. of R. Vol. 6, pp. 344-345. Manu leaves no doubt about where it stands on this issue, devoting only 86 of its 2,685 verses (less than 4%) to forest-dwellers and ascetic sannyasins and nearly six full chapters (over 50% of its text) to householders and kings. Moreover, even in the chapter dealing with renunciation (Chapter Six), Manu follows its discussion of "the Dharma of self-controlled ascetics" (6.86) with the statement that "the chaste student of the Veda, the householder, the forest-dweller, and the ascetic -- these four separate stages of life originate in the householder. Any or all of these (stages of life), adopted in succession by a Brahman who does what has just been explained in accordance with the teaching, lead him to the highest level of existence [parama gati]. But the householder is said to be the best of all of them, according to the rule of the revealed canon of the Veda, for he supports the other three" (6.87-89). Similarly, in the discussion of "the supreme good for a Brahman" (12.82-104), Manu states that "a man who knows the true meaning of the teachings of the Veda becomes fit for union with ultimate reality [Brahman] even while he remains here in this world, no matter what stage of life he is in" (12.102).

Given this emphasis on householders, it is not surprising that Manu allocates comparatively little attention to the stages of forest-dweller and sannyasin. It is more surprising, perhaps, that it

allocates any attention at all to these stages. If even a householder can reach "the highest level of existence" (6.88) and become "fit for union with Brahman" (12.102), then why should anyone abandon household life to become a forest-dweller or wandering ascetic? The authors of Manu may well have asked the same question, and it is likely that they would not have advocated renunciation of household life at all if they had been able to avoid it.

By the time of Manu, however, no one who wanted to lay out a comprehensive system of Dharma could ignore the presence of forest-dwellers, ascetics, monks, and tapasvins of all sorts in the society at large. There is no way to know how many renunciates there may have been in northern India at any given time who had either never married or had abandoned their life as householders, but absolute numbers were probably never as important as the status and cumulative influence of renunciators. Not all of the Upanisadic teachers abandoned their families to become wanderers or forest dwellers, as is evident from examples in the early Chandogya Upanisad of the householder Satyakama Jabala teaching his student Upakosala (4.10-15) and the householder Uddalaka Aruni, one of the greatest Upanisadic seers, teaching his son Svetaketu (6.1-16). Other teachers, however, did leave their families, as we know from the departure of Yajnavalkya from his wife (and student) Maitreyi described in Brihadaranyaka Upanisad 2.4 and 4.5, and certainly the general thrust of Upanisadic teaching was toward at least eventual renunciation once the necessary knowledge was attained. As

Yajnavalkya says in the Brihadaranyaka, in an account placed just before his departure in 4.5:

"He is the great unborn Self [atman] who is this (person) consisting of knowledge among the senses....Him Brahmins seek to know by the study of the Veda, by sacrifice, by gifts, by penance [tapas], by fasting. On knowing Him, in truth, one becomes an ascetic [muni]. Desiring Him only as their world, monks [pravrajinas, 'wandering mendicants'] wander forth. Verily, because they know this, the ancient (sages) did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring (they said), we who have attained this Self, this world. They, having risen above the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds, led the life of a mendicant [Bhiksa-carya]. (4.4.22)

Yajnavalkya, from this evidence, placed life as a renounced wandering mendicant at the end of the quest for knowledge. Others, however, saw renunciation not as the product of enlightenment but as the means by which to achieve it. Jains advocated rigorous asceticism and absolute non-violence (ahimsa) to free the individual soul (jiva) from karmic deposits and gain the goal of freedom and "isolation" (kaivalya), and Buddhists believed that leaving householder life and becoming a celibate monk were preconditions for enlightenment and the "final blowing out" of attachment (parinirvana). By the time the Laws of Manu was written, Jain ascetics and Buddhist monks probably outnumbered followers of the Vedic Upanisads in northern India, making it more and more difficult to defend householder life as a context for pursuing release from rebirth.

Both Buddhists and Jains, moreover, advocated adoption of renunciate values by householders as far as possible, especially the

practice of non-violence. Householders could not achieve the final goal of parinirvana directly, but they could improve their karmic condition and avoid negative karma to improve their future rebirths. Stories of the Buddha's past lives emphasized the importance of this gradual process, as did the concept of a sequence of stages beginning with "stream entering" and "stream winning" that would lead eventually to arhatship over a period of many lives. Without a more accurate knowledge of the relative chronology of Manu and early Buddhist texts such as the Jataka tales, it is impossible to know which particular teachings may have been known to or influenced Manu's authors, but it is certain that both the Buddhist and Jain traditions -- while reserving the final goal of release to monks and ascetics respectively -- taught the merit of their renunciate morality for householders as well as those who had formally renounced household life. And however these teachings were conveyed, whether in formal texts or informal preaching, their cumulative effect must have put increasing pressure on those who sought to defend the status of Brahman householders.

It was not only ordinary householders who were urged to adopt the qualities of renunciation, moreover, but also princes and kings. The Buddha and Mahavira, the founders and exemplars of the Buddhist and Jain traditions, were both princes from royal families who renounced household life altogether. Various Jataka tales of the Buddha's former lives, however, portray the bodhisattva or Buddha-to-be as a renunciate king (see, for example, the story of Prince Vessantara in John S. Strong, The Experience of Buddhism, pp. 23-

26), and the Jain system of salaka purusas or "illustrious beings" of each age included not only the twenty-four ascetic saints or Tirthankaras ("ford-makers"), all of them royal renunciates, but also seven world-conquering Cakravartins and nine royal Baladevas (including Rama and Krishna's elder brother Balarama) who practiced ahimsa even as householder kings and princes and renounced the world near the end of their lives to become Jain mendicants and attain release (maksa) when they died (see John E. Cort and Padmanabh S. Jaini in Wendy Doniger, ed., Purana Perennis, pp. 198-206 and 209-213).

Neither the Buddha nor Mahavira was ever a ruling king, of course, and the examples of renunciate bodhisattvas, Cakravartins, and Baladevas in the Jataka tales and Jain puranas represented ideals from the quasi-historical past rather than current historical figures. The greatest challenge to Brahmanical values may therefore have been the more recent example of the Mauryan emperor Asoka, whose actual achievements and policies -- and whose soon legendary reputation as an ideal Buddhist king -- were closely linked to the expansion of Buddhism and Buddhist values from the third century BCE onward. As in the case of influence from Buddhist and Jain writings, it is uncertain how much the Brahmanical authors of Manu may have known in detail about either Asoka's actual rule or the legends that grew up around him, but there can be little doubt that they were aware of what he represented: a non-Brahmanical king who renounced violence and supported the dharma, the institutions, and the missionary activities of Buddhist monks.

It was not only Buddhists and Jains, however, who advocated renunciation of violence by kings. Both the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as Norvin Hein has pointed out, contain numerous passages praising those who are "devoted to the welfare of all beings" (sarvabhuta-hite ratah), with the usual contextual meaning of acting with compassion and non-injury. (See Norvin Hein, "Epic Sarvabhutahite Ratah: a Byword of Non-Bhargava Editors," in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. LXVII, 1986, pp. 17-34.) Surprisingly, Hein notes, the phrase is seldom used to describe either gods or Brahman householders, but is applied most often to renunciate seers and yogis or -- most importantly -- to kings. As might be expected, many of the eighteen occurrences that Hein identifies in the Ramayana refer to Rama, the ideal king in that Eastern Gangetic epic that praises renunciation throughout for both kings and Brahmins. The Mahabharata, however, does not so consistently favor renunciation and non-violence, and it is there that Hein has found the most significant evidence for a conflict between the older Brahmanical acceptance of violence and the new values of renunciation and non-violence manifested by those who are "devoted to the welfare of all beings" -- the conflict that Manu responds to in its own formulation of separate Dharmas for kings and Brahmins.

Previous studies of the Mahabharata, Hein observes, have identified two major stages in the development of the epic: an early stage of bardic narrative, most evident in the books that deal with the immediate background of the Pandava-Kaurava conflict and the

resulting war (Books 2, 4, and 7-11); and a second stage in which control of the epic passed from the bards (sutas) to Brahmins of the Bhargava lineage who edited and expanded the text with their favorite myths and claims of Bhargava preeminence. The material added in the second stage, first identified by V. S. Sukthankar in the B.O.R.I. in 1936 (Vol. 18, Pt. 1), reflects the characteristically "arrogant and violent" views of the Bhargava editors (Hein, op. cit., p. 18), an assessment further confirmed by the collection and interpretation of Bhargava myths by Robert P. Goldman in Gods, Priests, and Warriors: The Bhrgus of the Mahabharata (Columbia, 1977). Prominent among these myths is the account of Parasurama, the prototypical violent Bhargava warrior-priest, whose killing of the Haihaya king Sahasrarjuna and destruction of the Ksatriyas is told in Mahabharata 3.115-117, and whose exploits provide a recurring motif in the Bhargava-edited epic.

To this two-stage model of suta and Bhargava editorship, however, Hein adds a third (or parallel second) stage that is the work of what he calls "brahmana irenicists" (op. cit., p. 33) whose "byword" is the phrase sarvabhutahite ratah, "delighting in the welfare of all beings" (p. 18). This phrase and its close variants appear some thirty-one times in the Mahabharata, nearly twice as many times as in the shorter Ramayana -- but with a less even distribution: no occurrences in the bard narrative of family conflict and war in Books 2, 4, and 7-11; sixteen occurrences in the late Books 12-14 in the context of massive didactic insertions; five occurrences in Book 6, all in the Bhagavad-gita (6.23-40); and a

total of ten in three earlier books (five in Book 1, three in Book 3, and two in Book 5). (See Hein, *op. cit.*, p. 28.) Unlike the Ramayana, moreover, where there is no evidence of Bhargava editorship, the "irenic" passages marked by the sarvabhutahite ratah phrase, especially in Books 1, 3, and 5, are intermixed with Bhargava material that carries a very different message of Brahman self-assertion and violence.

Hein explains the appearance of the non-Bhargava passages marked by the "byword" sarvabhutahite ratah as "a conscious literary creation" (p. 25) by new editors "with a strong distaste for stupid Bhargava bellicosity" (p. 32) who were "broader in their field of work and in their social sympathies" (p. 34) than their rival editors of the Mahabharata. And if this byword does in fact identify a specific group of non-Bhargava Brahman editors, Hein argues, it must be the same "literary group of far outreach" that "included all of the creators of the Ramayana" (p. 33) -- a text in which, as his evidence shows, the use of the phrase appears with great consistency and there is no sign of Bhargava composition or intrusions (p. 32). The two epics, then, in Hein's view, represent two interrelated efforts by the same tradition of Brahman irenicists: the overall composition of the Ramayana, and a concerted effort to insert into the Bhargava-edited Mahabharata a body of teachings that countered Bhargava bellicosity with a message of non-violence and concern for "the welfare of all beings."

Given the complex textual problems in both epics, especially in the massive Mahabharata, it may be difficult to go beyond Hein's

pioneer textual study unless further "bywords" or other distinctive features of his Brahman irenicists can be identified to help sort out their editorial contributions. Even if no further evidence or identification of these so-far anonymous editors can be found, however, there is useful historical information -- and another layer of confirmation for his thesis -- in the identity of those to whom the byword sarvabhutahite ratah is applied in both the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Brahmans -- or at least Brahman householders -- do not fare well in such an assessment. The Ramayans, as noted earlier, has almost no examples of ordinary Brahman householders, since even its married Brahmans such as Vasistha (the purohita or "household priest" of the Ikshvaku dynasty at Ayodhya) are portrayed as forest-dwelling hermits who respond on call for service to their royal patrons. The use of the ascription "devoted to/rejoicing in the welfare of all beings" is thus limited to either forest sages or kings, and the uniform pattern of use throughout the Ramayana suggests that it was an established phrase in the vocabulary of both the author of Books 2-6 (the original core of the epic, presumed to be the work of the hermit poet-sage Valmiki) and the redactors who added Books 1 and 7 (Hein, op. cit., pp. 25-26).

The situation in the Mahabharata is textually more complex, not only because of the long time span of its formation and the intermixed contributions of at least three different groups of authors (the sutas, the Bhargavas, and Hein's "Brahman irenicists"), but because the latter two groups had very different values and

concerns. If, however, we assume that the irenicists produced at least those portions marked by the appearance of sarvabhutahite ratah, we find that within those portions the pattern of attribution is much the same as in the Ramayana: i.e., those who are said to be "devoted to the welfare of all beings" are predominantly kings and forest sages and newer Brahman householders. The Brahman householders who do appear in the Mahabharata tend to be by contrast more in the Bhargava mold, as typified most dramatically by the vengeful Parasurama, and it is they who evoke some of the strongest counter-arguments in the early books of the epic in favor of non-violence and control of anger.

The basic thrust of this counter-argument can be seen in two stories that appear in Book 1: the story of Ruru (1.8-11) and the story of Aurva (1.169-171). The first of these stories was identified by Sukthankar as a Bhargava addition to the epic because the protagonist Ruru was a Bhargava Brahman, but Hein sees this as a case of mistaken identity (op. cit. p. 20). Ruru is indeed a Bhargava, the great grandson of the founder of the lineage, Bhrgu (1.8.1-2), and the story appears in the midst of what otherwise seems to be Bhargava material. It begins, however, with the byword of the irenicists, and the view it expresses is "not a Bhargava message but the message of a critic of Bhargava behavior" (p.31).

There was a great seer of old, named Sthulakesa, the story says, who was "endowed with the power of austerities and with wisdom" and was "devoted to the welfare of all creatures" (1.8.4).

With him in his hermitage lived a maiden named Pramadvāra (daughter of the Aspara Menaka and Visvāvasu, king of the Gandharvas), who had been abandoned at birth by her mother and had been raised by Sthulakṣa as his foster daughter after he found her lying on a riverbank. [Up to this point, the story parallels the account in 1.65-66 of Sakuntala, daughter of Menaka and the Kṣatriya-turned-Brahman tapasvin Visvāmitra, who was also abandoned by her mother at birth and raised by the sage Kāśyapa Kanva in his hermitage.]

The Bhargava Ruru came to the hermitage when Pramadvāra had grown up into a beautiful young woman, fell in love with her, and arranged to marry her. Shortly before the wedding, however, Pramadvāra was bitten by a snake and died. Ruru won back her life from the gods in exchange for half his own life, and the two were duly married, but Ruru swore an oath to destroy every snake he saw. Thereafter, whenever he came upon a snake, "a dread fury possessed him, and he ever grabbed a club and killed the snake if it was near enough" (1.9.19).

Ruru's fury, moreover, extended beyond snakes to other reptiles. One day, while walking in a forest, he came upon an aged lizard and began to beat it also with a stick. This was no ordinary lizard, however, but a seer who had been cursed by a Brahman to become a powerless reptile until he saw Ruru. Freed from his curse, he now explained to Ruru "what will be of profit to you":

Noninjury is the highest Law [dharma] known to all breathing creatures; therefore a Brahman gifted with breath shall

nowhere kill any living creatures. A Brahman -- so a most important scripture asserts -- is born in this world to be friendly, erudite in the Vedas and their auxiliaries, and everready to grant safety to all beings, my friend. Not to inflict hurt, to speak the truth, and to be forgiving is assuredly for the Brahman a Law even higher than preserving the Veda. The Law of the Ksatriya, however, that does not become you -- to wield the staff, to be dreaded, and to protect the people. (1.11.11-15)

Hein says about this passage that it is a "sermon on non-violence...preached to a Bhargava by someone who thought that Bhargavas had special need of such admonition. It is not a Bhargava message but the message of a critic of Bhargava behavior" (op. cit., p. 31). There is no indication as to what "important scripture" the seer/lizard refers in his sermon on non-violence, but it is clearly not one that reflects either the usual Bhargava attitude or a more general viewpoint of the Brahmanical sacrificial tradition. Especially striking is the statement that the dharma of non-injury, speaking the truth, and forgiveness is "even higher than preserving the Veda" (1.11.14), a view that strikes at the heart of the usual self-identification of Brahmans as above all else the preservers of Vedic knowledge. Identified as it is by the byword sarvabhutahite natah (1.8.4), this section is certain evidence that a new view of Brahmans and their social role had now entered the culture of the epic by way of a group of Brahmanical editors themselves.

The second revealing story, the story of the Bhargava Aurva as told by the sage Vasistha in Mahabharata 1.169-171, is not part of Hein's discussion because it is not identified by the irenicists' byword. It is instead an element in another major body of material

in the epic associated with Vasistha, hereditary household priest to the Ikshvaku dynasty and the great grandfather of Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa. The setting of the story is a conversation between Vasistha and his grandson Parasara, who has appeared earlier in the epic (1.54.2, 1.57.56-73, and 1.99.7-15) as the ascetic seducer of Satyawati on her ferry-boat -- a seduction that led to the birth of Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa and thus later to Vyasa's conception of Dhritarashtra and Pandu. Vasistha's family, as these connections indicate, plays a central role in the Mahabharata as a whole, because Vyasa is credited with the authorship of the epic itself and it is his miyoga offspring who are the fathers of the warring Kauravas and Pandavas. It was Vasistha's curse, moreover, that caused the divine Vasus to be born as humans through the womb of Ganga and the agency of king Samtanu, bringing about the birth of the eighth and only surviving Vasu (Dyaus) as prince Bhisma (1.92-94), later to be the advisor to Satyawati, to her sons Citrangada and Vicitravirya, to Vicitravirya's miyoga sons Dhritarashtra and Pandu, and to the Pandavas and Kauravas -- the latter of whom he served as commander-in-chief of their army. And even earlier, we are told in 1.89.37-42 and 1.60-63, Vasistha had come to the aid of the ancestral king Samvarana and his wife Tapati, daughter of the Sun god Savitar, and helped rescue the kingdom that was passed on to their son Kuru. Directly or indirectly, Vasistha was therefore responsible for the preservation of the lineage of Kuru, for the birth of the noble Bhisma, for the births of Dhritarashtra and Pandu, for the prosecution of the war between their offspring, and for the telling of the whole story by his great grandson Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa.

Given this background, Vasistha clearly deserves attention both for the role he plays in the narrative and for the message he conveys by his character and teachings. Something of his character is shown in the frame-story that precedes his conversation with Parasura and the Aurva narrative, which are set in the context of the killing of Vasistha's sons by a demon-possessed king abetted by Vasistha's ascetic rival Visvamitra. The rivalry between Vasistha and Visvamitra is understood by the tradition to be ancient and continuing, but it turns around a central event -- told here as a prelude to the frame-story -- that crystallized their ongoing conflict and set the Ksatriya prince Visvamitra on the path to becoming a Brahman ascetic and rival to Vasistha.

Visvamitra's transformation into a Brahman by means of severe austerities (tapas) is often praised in the Mahabharata, and he is both listed among the great kings (1.1.163-171) and honored -- with a blend of respect and fear -- for his great tapasvin powers (as in Sakuntala's account of her father's deeds and qualities in 1.65.20-1.66.10). His dual nature as a Ksatriya-turned-Brahman, however, was similar to that of the Ksatriya-like Bhargava Brahmins -- a parallel reinforced by the fact that his older sister Satyawati (daughter of Gadhi, king of Kanyakubja) married the Bhargava priest Rcika and, as a wedding gift from the Bhargava patriarch Bhrgu himself, received the boon that her mother would bear a son (Visvamitra, who through a confusion in executing the boon was born with a Brahman's nature) and that she herself would have a grandson

who (as a result of the same confusion) would be "a Brahman who will live like a Ksatriya" (Parasurama, who set the standard for Bhargava violence with his slaughter of the Haihaya king Sahasrarjuna and all of the Ksatriyas). (See 3.115.9-31)

All of this was of course known to the Mahabharata's editors, and it must have been Visvamitra's Bhargava-like qualities that inspired the arranged sequence of stories that leads to the story of Aurva. The larger framework of this sequence is an extended discourse to the wandering Pandava brothers by a Gandharva named Citraratha whom they have defeated in battle but spared from death. Concerned about a previous attack by a Raksasa demon, the Pandavas ask Citraratha how they can escape further danger from demons, and they are told that they can only be safe and prosper if they are led by a priest who is devoted to the Veda, knows dharma, and is truthful, moral, and pure (1.159.15-21). Citraratha then tells them as an example how Vasistha arranged the marriage of their ancestor Samvarana to Savitar's daughter Tapati and thus made possible the birth of Kuru and the continuity of the Paurava lineage (1.160-63). Arjuna then wants to know more about Vasistha, "the blessed seer who was the house-priest of our forebears" (1.164.1-5), and Citraratha in response tells the Pandavas that Vasistha's noble restraint from violence in the face of Visvamitra's provocation proved that even Lust and Wrath were defeated by his austerities. It is just such a priest that successful rulers need, he says, adding that it was by obtaining the great-spirited Vasistha as their house-priest that the kings of Ikshvaku's line (i.e., the Solar Dynasty)

obtained this earth (1.164.5-14) -- a reminder, if one was needed, that Vasistha was the traditional priest of the Ikshvakus at Ayodhya in the time of Rama.

Citraratha then begins a series of stories about Vasistha to illustrate the seer's self-restraint, starting with an account of his conflict with Visvamitra at a time when Visvamitra was still a Ksatriya prince. Vasistha at that time was living in his hermitage, studying the Veda and practicing austerities (tapas), with a Cow of Plenty (Kamadhenu) named Nandini (daughter of Surabhi, according to 1.93.8-11) who supplied all of his needs for food of every sort. Visvamitra came to the hermitage with his retinue while hunting in the forest, having become fatigued and thirsty in his search for deer. Vasistha greeted him with homage as a guest, and fed Visvamitra and his minister and armed escort all that they could eat from the bounty of Nandini. But when Visvamitra saw the "flawless and lovely cow," he wanted her for himself. When Vasistha refused all of his offers to purchase the Cow of Plenty, Visvamitra said that since Vasistha was only a Brahman with no means but Vedic knowledge and asceticism, and since there could be no resistance from a Brahman who was serene and had mastered himself, he as a Ksatriya would simply take the cow by force. And with these words, Visvamitra tried to lead the cow away forcibly, beating her with thongs and sticks to make her go (1.165.3-22).

Up to this point, this story also, like the story of Ruru discussed above, has a parallel: the story of Vasistha's cursing of the divine Vasus to be born as humans when they stole his Cow of

Plenty -- a curse delivered by Vasistha "in the grip of his anger" that led to the eventual birth of the Vasus' leader Dyaus as Bhisma, the celibate son of Ganga and King Samtanu (1.93). In the present story, however, Vasistha does not respond in anger when Visvamitra tries to take Nandini away, but instead tells Visvamitra that "you are a king at the head of a mighty army; make haste and do what you wish, take no time to reflect!" (1.165.20). Even when Nandini appeals to him for help, Vasistha is not upset but says that "a Ksatriya's strength is his energy, a Brahman's strength his forbearance; forbearance possesses me, so go if you wish" (1.165.28). Nandini appeals again, and says that if Vasistha does not forsake her "they will not be able to force me away." Vasistha then says "I do not forsake you," and that she should "stay if you can" (1.165.30).

Hearing the word "stay," Nandini's aspect becomes dreadful, her eyes blaze with rage, and she drives the army of Visvamitra around with thunderous bellows; her body shines with the fires of fury, and a rain of burning embers spouts from her tail. She creates the Pahlavas from her anus, the Sabaras and Sakas from her dung, the Yavanas from her urine, and a host of wild tribes and other barbarians from her foam, all clad in armor and brandishing arms. She scatters Visvamitra's troops before his eyes, and each of his soldiers is surrounded by five of hers. His army is then routed with a rain of rocks and driven off, but not a soldier is separated from his life. (1.165.31-40)

Seeing "this great miracle that sprang from Brahmanic power, "Visvamisra no longer wants to be a Ksatriya. "A curse on the power that is Ksatriya power," he says; "Brahmanic power is power. On weighing weakness and strength, asceticism appears the superior power!" Relinquishing his "prosperous kingdom and his blazing kingly fortune," Visvamisra than sets his mind on tapas. He becomes perfected by his tapas, burns all the worlds with his fiery power, attains Brahmanhood, and drinks the pressed-out Soma with Indra (1.165.41-44).

Citraratha's account of Vasistha's qualities has by this point brought out clearly in the context of these stories Vasistha's great forbearance and self-restraint -- qualities not so evident in the earlier story in another context that describes his anger at the Basus and the hasty curse with which he dooms them to human birth (1.91 and 1.93). More importantly, however, it reveals the real reason for the rigorous asceticism that transforms Visvamisra from a Ksatriya into a Brahman: he seeks power, and sees the tapas of a Brahman ascetic as a better means of power than he can ever achieve as a king. He wants to be a Brahman, in other words, like his alter-ego Parasurama -- not just any Brahman, but a Brahman of the power-wielding Bhargava type.

Citraratha's sequence of stories then continues with another account of the conflict between Vasistha and Visvamisra that forms the immediate frame-story for the story of Aurva. In this account, Visvamisra is now a powerful Brahman tapasvin and Vasistha -- though still a great hermit -- has a married son named Sakti, the

eldest of his hundred sons (1.166.4). Sakti is walking one day along a narrow forest path when he encounters the Iksvaku king Kalmasapada coming in the opposite direction. The king, face-to-face with Sakti, tells him to "get off the path, it is ours!" Sakti tries to soothe the king by speaking to him in a kindly voice, but does not give way, and the king "out of pique and anger with the hermit" hits him with his whip as a Raksasa might do (1.166.5-8). Stung by the whip, Sakti curses the king that, since he behaves like a Raksasa, he "shall from this day be a man-eater" who "will roam this earth and feed on human flesh" (1.166.9-10).

Unknown to both Sakti and Kalmasapada, Visvamisra has been following behind the king on the path and sees the confrontation. He has been feuding with Vasistha for the king's patronage, and sees a chance to turn the situation to his advantage. Before Kalmasapada can placate Sakti, Visvamisra orders a real Raksasa named Kimhara to take possession of the king. Kalmasapada manages for a while to control the Raksasa, but eventually -- aided by another curse from a Brahman to whom the possessed king unthinkingly feeds human flesh -- the Raksasa gains complete control. When Kalmasapada meets Sakti soon afterwards, he therefore kills him immediately and devours him "as a tiger devours its favorite prey" (1.166.35-37). Seeing his plan develop so successfully, Visvamisra then orders the Raksasa-possessed king to kill the rest of Vasistha's hundred sons -- which he does forthwith, eating them "as a lion eats small game" (1.166.38).

The story to this point is one of constantly escalating violence: the king orders Sakti off the forest path; Sakti refuses to move aside; the king hits Sakti with his whip; Sakti curses the king to eat human flesh like a Raksasa; Visvamisra orders a real Raksasa to possess the king; the king under the Raksasa's influence orders human flesh to be fed to a Brahman who wants meat; the Brahman reinforces Sakti's original curse and strengthens the Raksasa's power over the king; the Raksasa-controlled king kills Sakti, and on the command of Visvamisra -- emboldened by his success -- kills all the rest of Vasistha's sons. The violence stops, however, with Vasistha. Hearing that Visvamisra had contrived the death of his sons, Vasistha "held his grief in place as the great mountain holds the earth" (1.166.39-40). In what any hearer would recognize as a contrast with Parasurama's vengeful slaughter of the Ksatriyas, Vasistha -- rather than "plotting the extinction of the Kusikas" (Visvamisra's Ksatriya family line) -- decides to kill himself, thinking that his own lineage was ended with the death of all his sons (1.166.40).

Nature, however, refused to cooperate. Vasistha threw himself from Mount Meru, but the rocks caught him "like a pile of cotton." He lit a fire and entered it, but the flames turned cold and did not burn him. He threw himself into the ocean tied to a heavy stone, but the current placed him back on the mainland. He tied himself with ropes and threw himself into a river (the Vipasa or Beas in western India), but the river cut the ropes and washed him to the bank. He plunged into another river full of crocodiles (the

Satadru or Sutilej east of the Beas), but the stream treated him like fire and ran off in a hundred directions. Finally, deciding that he could not die, he returned to his hermitage and there found that Sakti's wife Adrsyanti was bearing Sakti's son who had already learned all of the Vedas while still in the womb. Joyously crying out that "there is offspring then," Vasistha "turned away from death." (1.166.41-1.167.15)

Vasistha and his daughter-in-law then "returned" (the text does not say to where) and "found Kalmasapada sitting in the empty wilderness" (1.167.17). The king, still possessed by the Raksasa, was ready to attack them, but Vasistha recognized who he was and what had happened to him, stopped him with the sound "hum" (a Vedic mantra of power), and sprinkling him with mantra-purified water he set him free from the Raksasa (1.168.3-4). The king regained his senses, greeted Vasistha with respect, and identified himself as the son of Vasistha's patron, king Sudara. Vasistha in turn advised the king to go and rule his kingdom and never despise Brahmans, to which he readily agreed. In addition, however, Kalmasapada asked a boon by which he could acquit himself of his debt to the dynasty of Ikshvaku: that Vasistha beget a son on his queen "for the furtherance of Ikshvaku's lineage" (1.168.13).

The reason for this request is given only later in Citraratha's narrative in 1.173 after the story of Aurva in 1.169-1.172. According to this delayed explanation, the demon-possessed Kalmasapada had gone to the desolate wilderness with his wife Madayanti after Sakti's curse and there, while he was hunting for

food in that haunt of wild beasts, he came upon a Brahman and his wife engaged in sexual intercourse. The couple, though "still undone," ran when they saw his Raksasa appearance, but the king quickly seized the Brahman. The Brahman's wife pleaded that her "season had come" for reproduction, she was "still not done with" her husband, and she had "great need for a child," but to no avail. The king "cruelly devoured her husband, as a tiger eats its favorite prey." (1.173.8-15). Overcome with rage at her husband's death, the wife shed a tear on the ground that blazed up into a fire, and before she entered the fire to join her husband she cursed Kalmasapada:

"Because today you fiendishly devoured my glorious and masterful husband before my eyes...before I was done, you shall be stricken by my curse, fool, and when you come to your wife at her season you shall instantly shed your life. The seer Vasistha whose sons you destroyed shall lie with your wife, and she shall give birth to a son; and that son shall be the keeper of your line, most foul of kings." (1.173.17-20)

The sage Vasistha, Citraratha concludes, saw all of this through the great yoga of insight and the power of his austerities, and it was thus that he agreed to Kalmasapada's request (1.173.20-24). Once that promise had been made to the demon-free king (to revert back to the earlier narrative), Vasistha went with the king to the great city of Ayodhya. There, "the queen at the king's command strode up to Vasistha," and at her season Vasistha "lay with the queen by divine precept" (1.168.21-23). When a child had been conceived in her, Vasistha was bidden farewell by the king and returned to his hermitage. The queen then carried the child in her womb for twelve years, but did not give birth. Finally, she split her womb with a stone and the royal seer Asmaka was born -- he whose

name means "stone," and who settled Potana [i.e., the Deccan city of Paithan or Pratisthana on the Godavari]. (1.168.24-27)

Meanwhile, after Vasistha's return to his hermitage, his daughter-in-law Adrsyanti gave birth to Sakti's posthumous son, who was named Parasara. Because he grew up with his mother in Vasistha's hermitage, he believed from birth that Vasistha was his father. One day, however, "when he said 'Daddy' to Vasistha in Adrsyanti's hearing," his mother told "with tears in her eyes" that he should not say "daddy" to Vasistha: "The great hermit is not your daddy. Your daddy was eaten up by a Raksasa in the depths of the forest, my son. The one you think is your daddy is not your father, innocent child. The lord is the father of your great-spirited father" (1.169.5-9). Parasara was "vexed" at her words, "for he always spoke the truth; and haughtily he decided to destroy the entire world" (1.169.9-10). To stop him, Vasistha then tells him the story of Aurva, a prototypical Bhargava.

"There once lived on earth a king known as Krtavirya," Vasistha says, "who was in the world the patron of the Bhrgus [Bhargavas], scholars of the Vedas" (1.169.11). This king [whom we know elsewhere -- but not here -- as a Haihaya ruler and father of Sahasrarjuna] gave the Bhrgus "plentiful grain and riches at the end of his Soma sacrifice" (1.169.13). After he died, however, his relations were in need of substance and demanded wealth from the Bhargavas. Some of the Bhargavas buried their wealth in the ground, while others -- knowing they were in danger from the Ksatriyas -- "gave it away to the Brahmins" [apparently understood here as

different from the Bhargavas]; but "these were also Bhrgus who gave them [the Ksatriyas] the riches they wanted, because they saw other uses for the Ksatriyas" (1.169.15-17). Then one day one of the Ksatriyas, digging up the earth in the Bhargavas' dwelling place, came upon a treasure and showed it to the other Ksatriyas. Angry and contemptuous, the Ksatriyas thereafter shot down all the Bhargavas, travelling through the land and killing them down to children in the womb so that the wives of the Bhargavas fled in terror to the Himalaya (1.169.17-20).

One of the Bhargava women "with beautiful thighs" carried her effulgent child down in her thigh to hide him, "to propagate the line of her husband," and when the Ksatriyas found her "the child split open her thigh and appeared, blinding the eyes of the Ksatriyas like the sun at noon" (1.169.20-22). Blinded and wandering around sightless, the Ksatriyas appealed to the mother for mercy and were told that it was not she who blinded them but her son Aurva, whom she had carried for a hundred years in her thigh and who had acquired "the entire Veda and its six branches" when she bore him "to be once more of benefit to the dynasty of the Bhrgus" (1.170.1-5). They should, she said, appeal not to her but to Aurva, who "certainly wishes to kill you out of anger over the slaughter of his fathers" (1.170.5-7).

The Ksatriyas then "pleaded with her thigh-born son: 'Have mercy!' And he had mercy. It is by this name that the very strict man is famous in the worlds -- "Aurva," because the Brahman seer was born by splitting the thigh" (1.170.7-8). [A similar account of

his name Aurva -- literally, "born from the thigh (uru)" -- is given in 1.60.40-46, where he is identified as the grandson of Bhrgu (who "issued forth by breaking open Brahma's heart"), the son of Bhrgu's son Cyavana and Manu's daughter Arusi (from whom Aurva was born by splitting open her thigh), and the great grandfather of Parasurama by way of his son Rcika (who married Visvamitra's sister Satyavati) and Rcika's and Satyavati's son Jamadagni (who had his wife Renuka's head cut off -- and restored -- by his son Parasurama, as told in 3.116.5-19, and whose death at the hands of Sahasrarjuna's heirs in revenge for Parasurama's slaughter of their father inspired Parasurama to kill all of the Ksatriyas twenty-one times until he was stopped by his grandfather Rcika, as told in 3.116.20-3.117.10).]

After Aurva "had mercy" on the Ksatriyas by ending their blindness, the Ksatriyas departed. Aurva remained angry, however, and "willed the downfall of the entire world" (1.170.9)." The haughty man set his intent mind on the total destruction of the worlds entire. Wishing to bring honor to the Bhrgus, this best of Bhrgus swelled with the heat [tapas] of self-mortification for the destruction of all the worlds. He began to burn the worlds with their Gods, Asuras, and men in order to gladden his grandfathers with his vast and awesome austerity" (1.170.10-13).

As soon as they understood what he was doing, however, Aurva's ancestors descended from the World of the Fathers and begged him to "have mercy for the worlds" (1.170.15). The Bhrgus, they explain to him, did not die because they were powerless before the Ksatriyas' assault; on the contrary, they were bored by their

protracted lives and wished instead for heaven. Having perfected their souls, but not wishing to forfeit heaven by taking their own lives, they had aroused the Ksatriyas' fury on purpose so that they would do the killing. (1.170.15-19) Aurva's intended destruction of the worlds is thus based on a wrong interpretation and "does not please us," they conclude: "Restrain your mind from this evil destruction of all the worlds, for none of the Ksatriyas or any of the seven worlds offended our might and mortification, son. Rid yourself of the fury that has risen in you" (1.170.20-21).

Aurva is only partly persuaded by this plea from his ancestors, because he cannot belie the promise that he would destroy all the worlds; "I cannot live a man whose wrath and oath are of no consequence," he argues, and "unless it is diverted, my anger will burn me as the fire burns the drilling block" (1.171.1-3). Moreover, "the man who will appease the anger that had arisen in him for good cause is unable properly to safeguard the three Goals [the trivarga of kama, artha, and dharma]," for "the punisher of the unlearned is the savior of the learned" (1.171.3-4). "Kings who want to conquer heaven," he says, "employ their fury in a just cause" (1.171.4-5). His own anger was aroused even before he was born, when the massacre of the Bhrgus by those degenerate Ksatriyas "was condoned by the worlds and the Immortals within them" and the Bhrgus "found no recourse from their danger in any of the worlds" (1.171.5-8). If criminals are prevented, then "no criminal will be found in any world," but "if the criminal never meets one who prevents him, then many in the world rise to criminal acts." One who is knowing and

capable but does not suppress crime "may be a master, but he is tainted by the same act. If kings and sovereigns, even though able to do so, could not be made to save my fathers, thinking that life here was happy enough, then I am wroth with the worlds, and now I am master to them" (1.171.9-13).

Nevertheless, Aurva agrees, he cannot transgress the word of his ancestors even though the fire of his wrath will burn him if he suppresses it. He therefore asks the ancestors, who "have the well-being of all the worlds at heart," to "dispose whatever is best for the worlds, and for me" (1.171.14-17). The ancestors in turn propose that the fire of his anger that "wishes to set the worlds afire" should be released into the waters, for "the worlds are founded on the waters" and "the whole world is made up of water" (1.171.17-18). "Let the fire born of your wrath remain in the ocean, burning the waters," they say, for in this way "your oath will still be true, and the worlds with their Immortals will not be destroyed" (1.171.18-21).

Vasistha then concludes this story of Aurva by telling Parasara that Aurva "thereupon...cast out the wrath-born fire into Varuna's domain, and it eats the waters of the ocean. Thus do the scholars of the Veda know that it became a huge horse head, which spits fire from its mouth and drinks the waters of the ocean" (1.171.21-22). In like manner, Vasistha says, Parasara should also be blessed and "abstain from the destruction of the worlds, as you also know the higher Laws, wisest of men" (1.171.23).

Having heard the story of Aurva from his grandfather Vasistha, Parasara thereby "restrained his own wrath from destroying the worlds entire" (1.172.1). He still retains his anger against the Raksasas, however, whom he blames for the death of his father -- ignoring, it seems, the role that Visvamitra played in this murder-by-proxy (see 1.166.16-38). Parasara therefore initiates a sacrifice, the Session of the Raksasas (raksasasathra), in which he "burned the Raksasas, young and old, in memory of the killing of his father Sakti" (1.172.2-3). [This sacrifice parallels the Session of the Snakes (sarpasathra) performed in 1.47-53 by king Janamejaya (with a Bhargava as the hotr priest) to avenge the killing of his father, king Pariksit, by the snake king Taksaka -- an episode that also involves arguments against Brahman anger as well as asceticism and that concludes with the stopping of the sacrifice and the rescue of Taksaka and the surviving snakes by Astika, son of the peace-loving but self-centered ascetic Jaratkaru and the snake-king Vasuki's sister by whom Jaratkaru conceived Astika to save his starving ancestors who had fallen from heaven for want of ritual offerings from their lone and renunciate descendant. It was during the Session of the Snakes that Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa told "that sublime grand tale, The Mahabharata, as (his) mind contrived it" (1.53.35) -- one of the many internal starting points of the epic (see van Buitenen, "Introduction," Vol. 1, The Book of the Beginning, pp. xv-xxv).]

Vasistha does not attempt to stop Parasara's sacrifice of Raksasas, "having resolved that he should not break this second oath

of his" (1.172.4). Instead, the sage Atri -- one of the eight original rsis who were born from Brahma's mind in the early stages of creation -- comes for that purpose to the Session of the Raksasas along with three other of the original eight who are known as Prajapatis: Pulastya (progenitor of the Raksasas, Vanaras, Kinnaras, and Yaksas), Pulaha (progenitor of the Kimpurusas, Pisacas, goblins, lions, and tigers along with other animals), and the celibate Kratu. All of the four rsis want to stop the sacrifice and allow the Raksasas to live, and to that end Pulastya -- progenitor of the Raksasas -- addressed Parasara:

"Does nothing stop you? Do you take pleasure, son, in the massacre of all these unaware and innocent Raksasas? You that are so very virtuous are perpetrating the most lawless, total extinction of my progeny, Parasara, greatest of Soma drinkers! And King Kalmasapada himself is about to ascend to heaven! The younger brothers of Sakti, the sons of the great hermit Vasistha, are all joined with bliss and rejoice in the company of the Gods. All this was always known to Vasistha, great hermit, and so was this annihilation of the wretched Raksasas, son. You have been the instrument in this sacrifice, scion of Vasistha. Give up this Session and be blessed. Let this be its completion for you! (1.172.11-14)

When both Pulastya and Vasistha spoke to him in this fashion, Parasara put an end to the Session of the Raksasas. The fire that had been gathered for the Session was then cast out into the "wasteland on the northern flank of the Himalaya" where it is still visible at every cycle, as it "devours the Raksasas, and the trees, and the rocks" (1.172.15-17). With this -- and the delayed explanation of Vasistha's reason for fathering Asmaka in 1.173.1-24 -- the series of stories told by Citraratha comes to an end. The

Pandavas then pick up the earlier discussion (in 1.159.15-22 and 1.164.12-14) of their need for a priest, and ask the Gandharva Citraratha whether there is a scholar of the Veda who would be a suitable priest for them (1.174.1).

Citraratha recommends a Brahman named Dhaumya who is practicing austerities in the same forest, and when they have taken leave of Citraratha they go to Dhaumya's hermitage and choose him as their priest. He accepts them "with water to wash their feet, fruit and roots to eat, and with priestly offices" (1.174.8). They now consider themselves well protected, "having put a Brahman ahead of themselves," and have "high hopes of winning wealth, a kingdom, and the bridegroom choice of the daughter of the Pancalas" (1.174.8). Blessed by their new priest, they leave him to his austerities in the forest and go -- disguised as Brahman students -- to the capital of the Pancalas where (as told in 1.175-185) they will shortly win their new collective wife Draupadi as predicted earlier by Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa in 1.157.6-15.

The choosing of a Brahman priest by the Pandavas marks the end of the cycle of stories told by Citraratha, just as it was the Pandavas' concern about protection from Raksasa attacks that started the cycle with Citraratha's advice to choose a priest (1.159.15-21) and his example of how Vasistha furthered the marriage and rule of their ancestor Samvarana (1.160-163). The stories between these two brackets can thus be seen as a series of illustrations of various types of Brahmans, with Vasistha consistently representing the ideals of forbearance and self-control

and Visvamisra and Aurva representing the opposite qualities of violent anger and the unrestrained use of tapas-generated power. Parasara represents something of a middle ground between the two extremes as a hot-headed youth whose tapas-generated power is greater than his judgment, but he at least is willing to listen to reason: first from his grandfather Vasistha when he tells him the story of Aurva, and then from rsis who persuade him to stop his sacrifice of the Raksasas.

The stories are not just about Brahmins, however, but also about Ksatriyas -- or, more specifically, Ksatriya values versus Brahmin values. Vasistha, it is clear, is what a Brahmin should be: self-controlled, non-violent, and supportive of Ksatriyas who honor Brahmins -- i.e., Ksatriyas who are similarly what they should be. Visvamisra, by contrast, is portrayed both as a Ksatriya who does not honor Brahmins (as evidenced by his attempt to steal Vasistha's cow) and as a tapas-laden Brahmin after his transformation who preserves the violence and lust for power of a Ksatriya and honors neither Ksatriyas nor Brahmins. Inspired by jealousy and anger, Visvamisra directs a Raksasa to possess king Kalmasapada, leading directly to the death of the hundred Brahmin sons of Vasistha and indirectly to the threatened extinction of Kalmasapada's Ikshvaku lineage (when the demon-beset king is cursed by the wife of a Brahmin left childless by the murder of her husband before he can inseminate her in her season). Only Vasistha's forbearance and benevolent use of power stops the violence, and it is he as well who continues Kalmasapada's line by giving the cursed king's wife a son.

The story of Aurva as told by Vasistha to Parasara brings out even more clearly the confusion of Brahman and Ksatriya values -- appropriately, because Aurva is in the line of Bhargavas in whom Brahman and Ksatriya qualities are so often combined. Vasistha's account of Aurva makes him almost an alter-ego of Parasurama, because the story is set at the time when the Ksatriya descendants of Krtavirya were killing the Bhargavas (i.e., at the time of Parasurama, in contrast to the genealogy in 1.60.40-46 that makes Aurva the great grandfather of Parasurama). Aurva, like Parasurama, seeks to avenge the Bhargavas, but his plan is even more sweeping. Instead of killing only the Ksatriyas whom he has blinded by this blazing birth, he mercifully restores their sight and sets out to destroy all the three worlds with their Gods, Asuras, and men.

Stopped by his ancestors, who "have the well-being of the worlds at heart" (1.171.16), Aurva justifies his planned destruction in terms of a punishment of the unlearned to save the learned when kings could not be made to do so (1.171.3-13). Aurva, in other words, wants to take on the role of a king -- wielding the Rod of Punishment, in Manu's terms -- when kings have failed to do their proper job, but instead of just punishing the guilty (to whom he in fact shows mercy) he uses his tapas-generated power as a Brahman to try to destroy the worlds entirely, the innocent no less than the guilty. His anger-activated tapas remains even after his Bhargava ancestors explain that they intentionally provoked the Ksatriyas to

kill them, and the fiery anger can only be diverted to the ocean depths to prevent further destruction of Gods, Asuras, and men.

Parasara's anger is more personal, and his intent to "destroy the entire world" (1.169.10) is less self-consciously an effort to do the Ksatriyas' job for them. His model, it appears, is not in fact Ksatriyas by the power-laden Bhargava Brahmins, as evidenced by Vasistha's choice of the Aurva story to dissuade him. Parasara, like Aurva, does have a genuine grievance about the violent death of his relatives -- in this case, the killing of his own father and his ninety-nine uncles by the Raksasa-possessed king Kalmasapada. His anger, however, is provoked not by the death of his father per se, but by the injury to his pride in his truthfulness: he erroneously calls Vasistha "daddy" when he is instead his grandfather. A less legitimate reason for destroying the entire world can hardly be imagined, and even when his destruction is reduced to the Sacrifice of the Raksasas his punishment is inflicted not on the single guilty party -- the Raksasa whom Visvamitra sent to possess the king -- but on the entire class of Raksasas. Here, as with Aurva and also Parasurama (cf. 3.117.10), it is ancestors who stop the killing: not Parasara's ancestors, however, but the primal seer Atri and the seer Pulastya, progenitor of the Raksasas and thus the sacrificial victims' ancestor. Pleading for his "progeny," Pulastya condemns "the massacre of all these unaware and innocent Raksasas" (1.172.11-12), and Parasara -- like Aurva -- diverts his fiery anger to a remote location where its destructive power is constrained.

The irenicists' byword sarvabhutahite ratah is absent from this sequence of stories, but an obvious connection can be seen between them and the story of Ruru in 1.8-11. There also the message is one of non-violence, and the question of Brahmins taking on the qualities of Ksatriyas is directly addressed by the seer who had been transformed into a lizard by an angry tapas-wielding Brahmin. Chastizing Ruru for his angry vengeance against all reptiles for one serpent's killing of his bride Pramadvarya, the seer/lizard tells him "what will be of profit" to him: that non-injury is "the highest dharma known to all breathing creatures" and that Brahmins should be not only knowledgeable about the Vedas and "everready to grant safety to all beings," but more importantly should not inflict harm and should be truthful and forgiving (1.11.11-14). The dharma of a Ksatriya -- to wield the staff (danda), to be dreaded, and to protect the people -- does not become a Brahmin (1.11.15); a Brahmin should nowhere kill any living creatures (1.11.13).

The lizard/seer then gives as an example of "a Ksatriya's task" the Sacrifice of the Snakes (sarpasattra) performed by king Janamejaya to avenge the killing of his father Pariksit by the serpent king Taksaka -- a massacre of the snakes that was only stopped, he says, by "a Brahmin alone, one that possessed austerity [tapas], courage, and strength, who had command of the Vedas and their auxiliaries [angas]," whom he identifies as "Astika, foremost among the twice-born" (1.11.16-18). The inception and performance of this sacrifice are described only many chapters later in 1.47-52,

and we learn even later (in 1.53.32-56.34) that it was during the intervals of its performance that Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa told the story of the Mahabharata. First there is a long account of the origin of snakes and of the giant bird Garuda (1.14), the churning of the ocean to find amrta, the Elixir of immortality (1.15-17), the cursing of the snakes by their mother Kadru, the wife of the ascetic sage Kasyapa (1.18), and a series of stories centering around Garuda (1.19-32). These stories are then followed by accounts of how the snakes, led by Vasuki, the King of the Snakes (naga-raja), planned to frustrate Kadru's curse (1.33-35), how King Pariksit was cursed by the "prickly and ill-tempered" Brahman Srngin to die by the venom of "the great Snake Taksaka" because of an act of disrespect to Srngin's hermit father (1.36-38), how Taksaka killed Pariksit to fulfill the curse (1.39-40), and how Astika was conceived by the hermit Jaratkaru on the sister of Vasuki the Snake King to satisfy Jaratkaru's ancestors and fulfill the promise by the Creator God Brahma in 1.34.10 that it would be only "the eagerly biting Snakes, the mean and evil and virulent ones, that are doomed to die, not the law-abiding Snakes" as a result of Kadru's curse and the impending sacrifice by King Janamejaya (1.41-44; cf. also 1.18.19 and 1.34-35).

The sacrifice itself begins only after Janamejaya is told of the curse that led to his father Pariksit's death and Taksaka is confirmed as the one who performed the killing (1.45-46), which leads Janamejaya to have a sacrificial ritual performed that will "lead the Snake Taksaka and his kinsmen into the blazing fire"

(1.47.4). The sacrificial grounds are laid out, but a "master builder of much wisdom" who is "a bard of the ancient Lore" predicts that the sacrifice will not be concluded because a Brahman will stop it (1.47.13-15). The king orders the sacrifice closed to anyone unknown to him, and the ritual proceeds with Candabhargava as the hotr priest aided by Vyasa, the Upanisadic seer Uddalaka and his son Svetaketu, and the sages Narada and Atreya among others. "Millions and tens of millions" of snakes are drawn into the vortex of the sacrifice to die a fiery death, until "the screams of those that were falling [into the fire] and of those still hovering in the air and of those that were frying...reverberated along the skies" (1.48.5-13). It was within this context that Astika carried out his act of salvation -- and, we should remember, that Vyasa told the tale of the Mahabharata war.

Terrified by the relentless destruction of the Nagas, Taksaka sought sanctuary with Indra and Vasuki called on Astika to fulfill his ordained mission. Appearing at the sacrifice as a Brahman, the snake-born son of Jaratkaru enters the sacrificial arena with Janamejaya's approval after he sings learned praises of the sacrifice (1.49.27-50.18), and received a boon from the king just as Taksaka is about to fall from Indra's heaven into the sacrificial fire (1.51.1-17). The boon he chooses, of course, is to stop the sacrifice, a boon that Janamejaya is powerless to deny once it has been promised. The sacrifice is stopped, Taksaka is saved from death, and the race of Nagas is preserved. Even Janamejaya honors Astika with gifts, and he returns home to his mother and his uncle Vasuki

to report his success and ask that the Nagas henceforth cause no fear "to Brahmans and other folk in this world who, morning and evening, tranquil of mind, will recount this epic of Law of mine" (1.53.10-21). Vasuki the Naga-Raja agrees, and the mission of Astika, "scion of the Bhrgus" (1.51.22; cf. 1.44.18), is completed. "After having set free the serpents from the Session of the Snakes, the great law-minded Brahman went in due course to his fate, leaving sons and grandsons behind" (1.53.24).

It is hard to know what to make of this series of myths and stories that climaxes with Janamejaya's sacrifice, Vyasa's initial telling of the Mahabharata, and Astika's rescue of the Nagas. Snakes (Nagas) figure prominently in the narratives that follow the story of Ruru in 1.8-11: Vasuki, King of the Nagas, serves as the churning rope when the Devas and Asuras churn the ocean to produce Soma, the Elixir of Immortality (amrta) (1.16-17); the bird Garuda, whose mother has been cursed to serve the Nagas, steals the Soma from heaven for the Nagas as the price for release from servitude, but allows Indra to steal it back before the Nagas can drink it (1.14 and 1.20-30); the first-born Naga, Sesa/Ananta, abandons his mother Kadru and his brother Nagas, performs tapas at various holy places, and enters the underground at Brahma's request to hold the Goddess Earth steady on his head, "encircling her entire with endless coils" (1.32); cursed by their mother Kadru to be burned in the fire of Janamejaya's future sacrifice (1.18.8), the Nagas led by Vasuki consider how they can avoid destruction (1.33-35); King Pariksit, hunting a deer he had shot, drapes a dead snake around the neck of a

meditating hermit because -- having taken a vow of silence -- the hermit did not respond to his request for information (1.36.9-20); Pariksit is then cursed by the hermit's son to die by the bite of Taksaka, "greatest of snakes," despite the hermit Samika's admonition to his son that he is too proud and quick to anger and that he should either give up anger or give up Dharma because "the anger of ascetics kills the merit they have painfully gathered" and turns their course to evil (1.36.21-38.9); Pariksit is killed in accordance with the curse, and is succeeded by his son Janamejaya (1.38.13-1.40); Vasuki marries his Naga sister Jaratkaru to a Brahman ascetic of the same name, and Astika is born of their union (1.41-44); and Janamejaya, learning the cause of his father's death, performs the Session of the Snakes that is ended by Astika's intervention before Taksaka can be killed in the sacrificial fire (1.45-1.53.26).

After their central role in the Astika sequence in 1.13-53, however, the Nagas almost disappear from the narrative. The real narrative, in fact -- that is, the actual Mahabharata story -- begins only after the Astika sequence with the statement in 1.53.33 that Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa told the great Bharata story at Janamejaya's Session of the Snakes. This statement is made by the Bard Ugrasravas at a gathering of seers who had come together in the Naimisa Forest to perform a twelve-year sacrificial Session presided over by the "family chieftain" Saunaka, a Bhargava (1.1.1-2, 1.4.1-5, and 1.5.5-6). Ugrasravas, son of the Bard Lomaharsana, is first asked to tell about the "Descent of the Bhrigus" (1.5.3) -- i.e., about the lineage of Saunaka. This account begins with the story of

the Bhargava patriarch Bhrgu and his son Cyavana and continues, at Saunaka's prompting, with the story of Ruru (1.8-11) and the sequence of stories about Janamejaya's sacrifice and the rescue of the Nagas by Astika (1.12-53). After the Astika sequence is concluded, Saunaka then asks to hear about the stories told during the intervals of Janamejaya's Session of the Snakes, and Ugrasravas says that "in the pauses between rites the Brahmans told tales that rested on the Veda, but Vyasa told the wondrous Epic, the grand Bharata" (1.53.31-33). Saunaka wants to hear "that holy Epic" that "sprang from that saintly seer's oceanic mind" (1.53.34), and Ugrasravas then begins his presentation of the Mahabharata -- a presentation made possible, he says, because he was at Janamejaya's sacrifice and heard Vyasa's student Vaisampayana recite it at Vyasa's direction as he had heard it earlier from Vyasa himself (1.1.8 and 1.54.21).

The Mahabharata as we know it in the Critical Edition is thus presented -- or presents itself -- as the words of the Bard Ugrasravas as told to the Bhargava Brahmans assembled for Saunaka's sacrificial session. The Mahabharata that "sprang from" the mind of Vyasa begins only at 1.55 in the context of Ugrasravas' account of Janamejaya's sacrifice, and even then it is presented as being set forth not by Vyasa -- though he is present at the recitation -- but by his student Vaisampayana who, "having received the Story of the Bharatas from [his] guru," is "moved by a thrill of joy to recite it "at Vyasa's request (1.55.3). Vyasa therefore never appears directly as the narrator, though he is credited as the author, and the

narrator Vaisampayana who tells the story from this point onward does so within the frame-narrative of Ugrasravas' account to Saunaka and his fellow Bhargavas. Vyasa's "Story of the Bharatas" per se, moreover, is preceded by fifty-four chapters ascribed to the Bard Ugrasravas (pages 19-127 in van Buitenen's translation) that include his abbreviated account of the Bharata story (1.1-2), the background of Janamejaya's sacrifice of the snakes (1.3, 1.18, and 1.36-47), and -- in response to Saunaka's request (1.5.1-4) -- an account of the origin of the Bhrgus (1.5-11).

It is evident from this structural outline that the emphasis on snakes (Nagas) is a characteristic only of the pre-Vyasa portion of the Mahabharata. As soon as Vaisampayana's recitation of Vyasa's mind-born Epic begins, the Naga stories of the earlier chapters are left behind and the focus shifts to the Pandava-Kaurava conflict. The "Story of the Bharatas" is summarized once again (1.55-56), the virtues of Vyasa and his Mahabharata are praised (1.56.12-35), and Janamejaya's request to hear the story "again and entire" (1.56.3) is answered by Vaisampayana's account of how King Vasu Uparicara, a "scion of the Pauravas" (1.57.1), gave up his renunciate life at Indra's request, became a "universal monarch" (1.57.28) whose sons ruled Magadha, Kausambi, and the Yadavas, and conceived a son (Matsya) and a daughter (Satyavati) in the belly of the Apsara Adrika when his spilled semen inadvertently fell into the Yamuna river and was swallowed by the Apsara who was living there in the form of a fish. Given to the fishermen who caught the fish-formed Adrika, Satyavati was later seduced by the ascetic sage Parasara and

conceived Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa. Thus begins Vaisampaya's telling of the Bharata epic, which proceeds with a brief account of the origins of the great chiefs "by whom hangs this tale" (1.57.77-106) and a detailed account of the lineages leading down to the births of Dhritarastra and Pandu (1.58-100).

The disjunction between the first fifty-four chapters and those that follow clearly reflects a separate origin for the chapters (1.1-1.54) ascribed to Ugrasravas, which must have been joined to Vyasa's "Story of the Bharatas" to give the epic a new beginning and add new material -- most likely as part of the Bhargava editing of earlier bardic material, given the setting of Ugrasravas' recitation at a sacrificial session of the Bhrigu chieftain Saunaka and his telling of "the Descent of the Bhrigus with all its attendant stories, as is found in the ancient lore" (1.5.7) at Saunaka's request. This material, which comprises most of chapters 1.5-1.52, is credited by Ugrasravas to "such great-spirited Brahmans as Vaisampayana and his successors" who, having "committed [it] to memory long ago" (1.5.4), recited it to Ugrasravas' father Lomaharsana. That "ancient Lore" in which "are recounted both celestial tales and the first lineages of the wise" (1.5.2) was in turn memorized by Lomaharsana and passed down to his son Ugrasravas, who likewise "learned [it] no less perfectly" (1.5.5) so that he can now recite it to Saunaka and his followers -- who have, Saunaka tells him, heard these tales and lineages before from Lomaharsana himself (1.5.2).

The effect -- and no doubt the intended effect -- of this discussion of oral transmission was to give Brahmanical legitimacy

to the recitation of Ugrasravas, who was not himself a Brahman but a bard or suta like his father Lomaharsana. It is evident, moreover, that this is only one aspect of a more complex process of legitimation that involves the epic as a whole. Ugrasravas' contribution traces its origin to the Brahman Vaisampayana and his successors who passed it on to Lomaharsana, a bard, while it was Ugrasravas himself who heard Vaisampayana recite Vyasa's "Story of the Bharatas." The seeming anachronism of these two transmissions gives the "Descent of the Bhrigus" an apparently greater antiquity than Vyasa's Bharata epic, since Ugrasravas had only recently heard the latter recited by Vaisampayana at Janamejaya's sacrifice (1.1.8-12) -- its first public performance -- while the stories of the Bhrigus and Nagas in 1.5-1.52 were "ancient Lore" (1.5.1-2) "committed to memory long ago" by Vaisampayana and his successors (1.5.4). Looked at in this light, the frame-story set in the context of Saunaka's sacrificial session achieves two related results: it places the ultimate recitation of the Mahabharata as a whole -- the recitation of record, one might say -- not at King Janamejaya's sacrifice but in the setting of a sacrifice performed for the Bhrigu chieftain Saunaka by his Bhargava priestly followers, while still retaining the authority of Vyasa's creation of the epic and Vaisampayana's oral transmission; and it legitimates Ugrasravas' presentation of the "Descent of the Bhrigus" by placing it in this context and tracing its oral transmission through Vaisampayana even before he recited Vyasa's "story of the Bharatas."

There can be little doubt from these results that the editors who placed Vyasa's epic within a Bhargava frame-story did so to legitimate the Bhargava lineage and give those who claimed descent from Bhrigu superior status among the ranks of Brahmins. There is equally little doubt that such legitimation was needed, judging from the evidence assembled by P. V. Kane (History of Dharma Sastra, Vol. II, pp. 483-497). Brahmanical legitimacy -- i.e., the authority to transmit the Veda and perform Vedic rituals for others -- was based on having a legitimating lineage or gotra traceable to a Vedic rsi. As Kane notes, however, the most authoritative early statement on gotra lineages, the Baudhayana Sruta Sutra, says that "Visvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvaja, Gautama, Atri, Vasistha and Kasyapa are the seven sages (rsis) and Agastya is the eighth; the progeny of these eight sages is declared to be gotra" (Kane, op. cit., p. 483). Bhrigu is noticeably missing from this list of legitimating rsis, and it is by no means certain that Bhargavas -- i.e., those who traced their gotra back to Bhrigu -- had any significant status as Brahmins prior to the Mahabharata. Put simply, they needed the authority of Vyasa's epic to authenticate their claim to legitimacy and superior status, and adapted it -- edited it -- to serve that purpose.

If we look at the Mahabharata from this perspective, we can see that the Bhargava editors had two main interrelated tasks: to give the lineage of Bhrigu a prominent place in the Mahabharata, and to establish or reinforce the status of the Mahabharata itself so that its authority would sanction the Bhargava claims to Brahmanical status. The first of these goals could be achieved only by

establishing Bhrigu, the ancestor or pravara of the line, at the level of the gotra-founding rsis. The second goal, in principle both more essential and more far-reaching in its implications, depended on raising the status of the Mahabharata as a whole to match the authority of the earlier Vedas -- to make it, in effect, a fifth Veda alongside the rsi-revealed sound-formulations of truth on which Brahmanical authority was based.

It is hard to get a clear picture of the status of various priestly lineages at the time of the Mahabharata, because both the lineages themselves and the criteria for their legitimacy seem to have been in flux in the context of centuries-long social and religious changes. Part of the difficulty is undoubtedly because the Brahmins who sought legitimacy were members of historical families living in the aftermath of Mauryan and Buddhist expansion, while the sources of their legitimation -- the Vedic rsis -- were considered to be as much outside the historical process as was the "beginningless" (anadi) Veda in which they first appear. The problem of connecting these two ends of the priestly lineages -- a "beginningless beginning" and a historical present -- was recognized by medieval commentators (see Kane, Vol. II, pp. 485-486), but by that time the main Brahmanical gotras were solidly established on the basis of rudhi (convention or long-standing usage). The Mahabharata, by contrast, represents a time when lineage formation and legitimation were still in flux and it was possible -- as with the Bhargavas -- to stake one's claim in terms of a legitimating genealogy whose mythological nature was essentially no different

from that of the epic as a whole. Given that situation, it was clearly advantageous for those who sought to make such claims to control the formation and transmission of the epic tradition in order to ensure the validation of both the Mahabharata's authority and their own genealogical assertions.

The most important early authority on Brahmanical gotras, as noted above, does not include Bhrigu among the eight sages whose progeny are the gotras recognized by this text (Kane, op. cit., p. 483, citing the Baudhayana Sruta Sutra). Direct descent from one of these eight rsis, however, was not the only basis for legitimacy. The Atharva Veda uses the term arseya in a more general sense of "descendants of sages or those who are related to sages" (Kane, op. cit., p. 487) without restricting the sense to a specified number of rsis, and the Taittiriya Samhita of the Yajur Veda introduces the concept of pravara, literally "choice" or "summons," to designate an invocation of Agni at the beginning of a sacrifice that involves a request to Agni that he bear oblations to the gods as he did for the sacrifice's ancestors -- the most venerable of whom are then stated by name (ibid.). A number of such pravara invocations of Agni in the Vedas cite sages not found in Baudhayana's list of eight gotra-founding rsis. The appearance of such so-called pravara sages in the Vedas, and the fact that they were already in that context being cited to sanction their descendants' rituals, gave all of these pravara sages the status of founders or legitimators of lineages. In principle, therefore, Brahmanical gotras could be legitimated not only by arseya lineages in Baudhayana's more restrictive sense but

by claiming descent from a group of pravara sages sanctioned by their appearance in the Vedas.

But while Vedic rsis and pravara sages could be used to legitimate later Brahman gotras, the Vedas themselves did not link them to specific genealogical lineages -- nor could they, of course, have anticipated the problems of legitimation that arose centuries after most of the Vedas had been fixed in their final form. The most important rsis, moreover, already had an almost mythic quality in the earliest Vedic scripture, the Rig Veda, where they often seem to have a status closer to that of divine beings than of ordinary humans. Thus, although there is evidence in the early Vedas that two of the most important rsis, Angiras and Bhrgu, belonged to or represented historical tribes or clans (Hillebrandt, Vedic Mythology, Vol. I, pp. 108-120), the same sources identify them as equals with various groups of gods such as the Adityas, Rudras, Vasus, and All-gods (Visve Devas) (*ibid.*, pp. 115 and 117).

Hillebrandt explains this divinizing of rsis such as Angiras and Bhrgu as the result of a "euhemeristic path" (*ibid.*, p. 115) that began with the belief that certain famous ancestral priests had reached heaven by the power of their sacrificial fire rituals and ended by granting these ancestors a status alongside the heaven-dwelling gods. "Here," he says, "we find a clan or a tribe -- the lines of demarcation can hardly be drawn -- which elevated its ancestors into gods or god-like beings who begin to enter the realm of mythology, and placed them in heaven. Here we encounter the impact of the cult of the Manes on Vedic mythology" (*ibid.*, p. 115). This

seems to explain the Vedic evidence, and it fits also the Vedic practice of validating rituals by citing the names of ancestral rsis who created or performed them (*ibid.*, pp. 112-117). There is no doubt that the Vedic rsis were connected with family traditions by the time of the Srauta Sutras, as is evident from the discussion of pravara sages and gotras in these texts (see Kane, History of Dharma Sastra II, pp. 483-497), and it is thus likely -- though with less clear evidence -- that certain rsis were already honored as divinized ancestors by specific clans, tribes, or families as early as the Rig Veda.

If we assume that the early Vedas reflect a process of divinizing clan or tribal rsis, then what we have at the foundation of the Vedic/Brahmanical tradition is a kind of priestly version of divinized heroes -- but one in which the heroes are not warriors in the military sense but rather heroic warriors in ritual struggles that have the quality of warfare. This view of priestly involvement in the fire sacrifice as a form of heroic warfare corresponds closely to the concept of the "agonistic" sacrifice described by Jan Heesterman and Brian K. Smith, where "the world-view that informs the priestly ritual seems to be governed by values more often associated with a warrior class" (Smith, "Introduction" to Wendy Doniger's The Laws of Manu, p. xxiii; see also *ibid.*, pp. xxii-xxx, and Heesterman's The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society. Sacrificial ritual was in this sense a contest, not only between priests or priestly clans and families but between the rsis and the Devas, Adityas and Asuras, and the stakes

were high: control of rituals and ritual knowledge brought not only worldly power and success but could wrest power from gods and demons and bring immortality in heaven. Those who made this possible for the Brahman priestly class or for their individual clans could rightly be viewed as heroes, and it is understandable that the rsis who were credited with the knowledge and successes in this ritual struggle could be seen as having the status of gods. If they had attained heaven, controlled divine powers, and competed on an equal footing with the gods, were they not themselves divine?

The divinizing of the ancient Vedic rsis did not remove them from the category of ancestors, but it put them at an almost unreachable distance from later generations. The distance, moreover, was not just one of time, although that was literally unmeasurable. The rsis were seen as existing at the foundation of the present world when the beginningless Vedas were first revealed in the current cycle of ages. Rig Veda 10.90.7 places them alongside the divas and the god-like sadhyas as performers of the primal sacrifice of the Purusa from which the Vedic verses, chants and meters were born, the Brahmins and the other three varnas were produced, and the physical universe was created (Hillebrandt, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 258 and 417). The rsis were thus not themselves Brahmins, but co-creators of both the Vedas and the Brahmins; they performed the cosmogonic sacrifice not as Brahman priests who knew the received truths of the Vedic ritual, but as the creators and revealers of those truths. They were, to paraphrase the Gospel of John, present in the beginning with the Word, and they brought forth

both the form of the Word in sound and the Brahmins who transmitted it to later generations.

Not all of the Rig Veda references to rsis assign them such an exalted status. Rig Veda 7.18.6 identifies the Bhrgus as one of the "obedient clans" along with the Druhyus [who appear in Mbh. 1.80.26-27 as the descendants of King Yayati's son Druhyu and are identified as the Bhojas] (Hillebrandt, op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 116; cf. Mbh. 1.70.33 and 1.78.10-80.27). Such suggestions of an historical/social identity are rare, however, and the rsis predominantly appear in the early Vedas as beings far removed from the human condition as divinized ancestors who "settled down (in the heavens) to practice tapas" (Hillebrandt, op. cit. Vol. II, p. 260) or who were -- as in Rig Veda 10.90 -- participants in the primal cosmogonic sacrifice. This pattern was continued -- or reinforced -- in the later Grhya and Srauta Sutras and the Brahmanas, where we find the "seven rsis" located in "the world of the seven benevolent rsis" and identified with the stars of the Great Bear constellation (Hillebrandt, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 259-260 and notes 25-27, pp. 417-418).

The aggrandizement of rsis had reached its culmination by the time of The Laws of Manu, where the rsis stand near the beginning of the creation process as Prajapatis or "Lords of Creatures." Manu's description of creation is a complex amalgam of creation accounts from various Vedic sources, notable more for its inclusiveness than its metaphysical coherence. Creation began, according to Manu, with the universe in a condition of darkness similar to sleep -- a description based primarily on the creation myth in Rig Veda 10.129.

This unmanifest universe was made manifest by the creative energy of the Self-Existent Lord (Svayambhu), who brought forth the primal waters and, from his sperm emitted in the waters, created a Golden Egg (Hiranyagarbha). Within this egg was born Brahma, "the grandfather of all people" (1.9), who is identified as Narayana and Purusa (the Primal Person) (1.10-11). Dividing the egg in two, "just by thinking," Brahma made the sky and earth with the atmosphere between, and then out of himself he evolved the mind (manas), the "I"-sense (ahamkara), the "Great One (mahat) which is the self," and all the realm of the "three qualities" (gunas) (1.12-16).

Thus far, Manu's account is a blend of Rig Veda 10.129 and the system of cosmic evolution associated with the Samkya philosophy, early versions of which are also found in some of the late Upanisads and the Bhagavad-Gita. Manu's version makes no claim to rigorous metaphysical argument, and it differs substantially from the later systematic philosophy of the Samkhya system found in the Samkhya Karika (ca. 200 CE) and the subsequent philosophical schools of Samkhya and Yoga. Manu's brief account, moreover, provides an outline of cosmic evolution that is sketchy at best and has only minimal relevance to the main concerns of its authors: the truth of the Vedas, the power of Vedic rituals, the role of Brahmans in society, and the preservation of social order.

The Samkhya teachings in the Upanisads and the Gita emphasize the essential difference between the self or atman on the one hand and the evolved world of the three gunas on the other, and this difference is as important to their views of ultimate salvation

as it is in the later systems of Samkhya and Yoga. Manu, however, portrays the self/atman as part of the evolved world of the gunas (cf. 1.14-15 and 12.12-14, 24), not as essentially free and separate from the gunas, and thus describes salvation in terms of reducing the qualities of energy (rajas) and darkness (tamas) in a person and increasing the quality of goodness/lucidity (sattva) until sattva predominates in the embodied soul (12.24-25). The means to this end are "recitation of the Veda, inner heat [tapas], knowledge, the repression of the sensory powers, non-violence, and serving the guru" (12.83), but of these six, "Vedic activity must always be recognized as the best able to bring about the supreme good both here on earth and after death. For all of these (activities), without exception, are encompassed in the performance of Vedic activity, each in a particular rule for a ritual, one by one in order" (12.86-87).

Most of the Samkhya-related systems, including the Bhagavad-Gita and the later schools of Samkhya and Yoga, emphasize an ontological distinction between the quality-free atman and the phenomenal world -- Prakriti or "Nature" -- consisting of the three gunas. Manu, although it borrows the Samkhya-related concept of evolutionary creation, is distinctive in its insistence that the three gunas of sattva, rajas, and tamas are "the three qualities of the self [atman] through which the great one [mahat] pervades and endures in all these existences, without exception" (12.24). This precludes what the Gita calls the "mental attitude of discrimination" (samkhye buddhih), the recognition that the self in everyone is eternal and separate from the gunas (2.11-39), because for Manu the atman is

not only not unchanging but consists entirely of the gunas. The difference in views is further underlined, moreover, by Krisna's statement to Arjuna in the Gita that "the domain of the Vedas is the world of the three gunas" and that he should therefore "become free of the gunas and abide in eternal purity" (2.45), a statement that places both the means and the goal of salvation outside the realm of the very same Vedas that Manu sees as the source of "the supreme good both here on earth and after death" (Manu 12.86).

As this comparison makes clear, Manu's use of a Samkhya-like evolutionary scheme to describe creation did not extend to accepting the metaphysical separation of the atman from the gunas that is found in the Upanisads and the Gita and in the later Samkhya-Yoga system. The reason for this is made evident in one of the few statements in the Gita with which Manu would fully agree: that "the domain of the Vedas is the world of the three gunas" (Gita 2.45). For the Gita, of course, as noted above, this is an inducement to transcend the Vedas in order to free oneself from the realm of the gunas. For Manu, however, the coexistence of the Vedas and gunas is a positive statement about phenomenal existence and an affirmation that the Vedas underlie the entire world of human experience. There is no savior beyond the world of the gunas and Vedas in Manu's conceptual system, and no self or atman that is in its own essential nature pure and free; there is only salvation by means of the Vedas, from which come the knowledge and action that purify the guna-created atman and bring it immortality.

It is in this context that we can see the limited usefulness for Manu of the Samkya-like evolutionary description of creation in Manu 1.14-20, because it nowhere provides a place for the Vedas that are for Manu the means of salvation. Thus, having explained the basic structure of creation in its outline of the universe's evolution from Brahma/Narayana/Purusa, Manu begins an expanded account of creation that gives a central place to the Vedas and rsis. There is no acknowledged gap between the preceding evolutionary account and this new account, which is presented as a continuation of Brahma's creation. The terms and content are entirely different, however, and the abstract description of the evolving universe gives way to an explanation of why that universe -- which up to this point appears to be the product of its own inner dynamic -- depends upon the Vedas and the rsis for its salvation.

It is not the case, this new account says, that creation was an inner-directed and value-free process governed simply by the progressive evolution of Brahma's energy or Being into more and more discrete forms. On the contrary, the Creator Lord Brahma "in the beginning...made the individual names and individual innate activities [karmanas] and individual conditions of all things precisely in accordance with the words of the Veda" (Manu 1.21). He then "emitted the host of devas who have the breath of life and whose essence is the ritual, and the whole host of the Sadhyas, and the everlasting sacrifice" (1.22). From the fire, wind, and sun (already created from the three gunas in 1.15-20), he "milked out the triple eternal Veda, consisting of the Rg, Yajur, and Saman, so that the sacrifice could be accomplished" (1.23). He created time, the constellations and planets, rivers and mountains, tapas, speech, sexual pleasure, desire and anger; "indeed, he emitted precisely this created universe because he wanted to emit these creatures" (1.24-25). Then, "in order to

distinguish karmans, he distinguished dharma from adharma, and he yoked these creatures with the pairs, happiness and unhappiness and so forth" (1.26). From this point on, whatever karmic qualities he gave to each creature at first was continued in successive lives by that creature's actions; so "embodied beings by themselves take on their innate activities [karmans], each his own" (1.27-30).

Manu thus accounts for the particular features of the created world as the result of Brahma's creation "in accordance with the words of the Veda," including the creation -- in that order -- of the devas, the sacrifice, the three Vedic collections that make the sacrifice possible, and the dharma that determines whether innate activities (karmans) are good or bad. Dharma, the triple Veda, and the sacrifice, Manu makes clear, are part of the fundamental structure of the universe which is itself created in exact accord with the eternal Veda. All of this structure, moreover, exists before the creation of society, because it is only in the next stage of creation that Brahma/Purusa -- in the manner described in Rig Veda 10.90 -- creates the Brahman, Ksatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra varnas from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet respectively "so that the worlds and people would prosper and increase" (Manu 1.31).

Even when the varnas have been created, however, Manu has still not accounted for the actual people who will embody the principles and structures so far produced. Brahma thus must divide again, becoming "a man with one half, a woman with the other half" (1.32), and emit in the woman a male, Viraj, who generates tapas and by his own energy emits Manu, "the creator of this whole (universe)" (1.33). Manu in turn wanted to emit creatures," generated tapas, and "emitted the ten great sages [rsis], lords of creatures: Marici, Atri and Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Pracetas, Vasistha, Bhrgu, and Narada" (1.34-

35). It is these ten rsis, functioning as "lords of creatures" (prajapatis), who finally create the beings who inhabit the world: seven other Manus, each of whom presides over an "Age of Manu" (Manvantara) or Epoch of creation; the devas and "troops of the devas"; the ogres, ghouls, demons, snakes, supernatural birds, and the "several classes of the ancestors"; lightning, thunderbolts, clouds, rainbows, comets, whirlwinds, meteors, and "the higher and lower celestial lights"; and finally monkeys, fish, birds, livestock, wild animals, humans, beasts of prey, horses and other equines, worms, bugs, moths, lice, flies, mosquitoes and gnats, and "various stationary things" [i.e., plants] (1.36-40).

There is, to say the least, very little metaphysical or even logical consistency in this complicated and often confusing account of the various stages of creation. Manu's authors have cobbled together different concepts, theories, and descriptions of creation from a variety of sources, editing and combining them to fit their Brahmanical agenda. The results often appear contradictory or inconsistent to an outsider, but we have to assume that they made sense -- or achieved their intended purpose -- for those who produced the account. If that is so, then we need to see what the account in Manu affirms most emphatically and what it in fact achieves, especially with regard to the rsis.

Manu establishes at the beginning that the sole origin of the universe is Brahma, the "grandfather of all people" (1.9), born in the golden egg produced from the semen of "the Lord who is Self-existent [Svayambhu]" (1.6), his own unmanifest aspect. Brahma at this first manifest stage is identified with the primal Purusa who creates the world by his own self-sacrifice in Rig Veda 10.90, and with the Brahmanical deity Narayana who first appears as Purusa-Narayana in a sacrificial context in the Satapatha Brahmana and is later

(though not yet in Manu) identified with Visnu. This association of the Creator with the sacrifice -- already implicit in the name "Brahma," the personification of the sacrificial truth-power brahman -- is further reinforced by Brahma's creating the names, karmans, and conditions of all things "in accordance with the words of the Veda" (1.21), his creation of the gods "whose essence is the ritual" and of the sacrifice itself (1.22), his "milking out" the "triple eternal Veda" (1.23), and his creation of the four varnas beginning with the Brahman varna, the varna responsible for teaching the Veda and performing sacrifices for others (1.31).

It is clear from this evidence that the Vedas, the Vedic sacrifice, and the creator Brahma are inseparably related to each other in Manu's scheme. More accurately, we might say that they are the same creative reality. Brahma is the personified brahman, the creative truth-power of the sacrifice, who can create "in accordance with the words of the Veda" because the eternal Veda -- not yet made manifest in Manu's account -- is part of his own nature. He can similarly create the sky and earth from the Golden Egg "just by thinking" (1.12), because the creative power is inherent within him, and he "grew" (1.14) the mind (manas), the sense of "I" (ahamkara), the "great one [mahat]" which is the self [atman]," and the three qualities (gunas) as an extension of his own essence. Similarly, he "emitted" from himself the host of devas, the sacrifice, "inner heat [tapas]," speech, sexual pleasure, desire, and anger "because he wanted to emit these creatures" (1.22-25).

The next stage of creation, however, is subtly different. After Brahma had made the individual karmans and conditions of all things in accordance with the words of the Veda (1.21) and had distinguished dharma from adharma, each creature "by himself" continued his karmic pattern "as he was created again and again" (1.28) and his karman "kept entering it by itself" (1.29); so, Manu says,

"embodied beings by themselves take on their innate activities, each his own" (1.30). Once this framework had been established, even before the actual creation of specific "creatures" to embody the karmans, the structure of the self-sustaining karmic process was embedded in the emerging universe.

Thereafter, in Manu's account, Brahma's creations were of portions of himself: the four varnas were created from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet (1.31), and Viraj was emitted by his male half into his female half (1.32). Viraj then became a creator in his own right and emitted Manu, who became "the creator of this whole (universe)" (1.33) from this point onward as Brahma's surrogate in the creation process.

It is not only a transfer of the creative role that takes place in this stage, however, but also a change in the means of creation. Brahma "emits" creatures from himself by his innate creative power, but creation from Viraj onward is by means of tapas, internal or ascetic heat, which was earlier created by Brahma along with speech, sexual pleasure, desire, and anger (1.25). Viraj "generated ascetic heat [tapas]" and "by himself" emitted Manu (1.33) and Manu in turn "generated inner heat [tapas] that is very hard to produce" and emitted the ten great rsis because he "wanted to emit creatures" (1.34). These ten tapas-created rsis then became the creators of the world of actual creatures, emitting from themselves the Manus of each age, the devas, other great rsis, and all stationary and moving beings, including humans, all of whom are "created by those great-souled ones at [Manu's] command through the use of tapas" (1.41).

The ten rsis clearly have an important place in Manu's creation system, and a unique role in the creation process. Prior to the rsis, in Manu's account, creation is centered in a single figure at each stage: Svayambhu (the unmanifest "Self-Existent") creates Brahma; Brahma emits Viraj; Viraj, by means

of his tapas, emits Manu; and Manu, also by means of tapas, emits the ten rsis. The ten rsis, however, function as parallel but separate Prajapatis or "Lords of Creatures," each responsible for bringing forth a particular category of creatures. Together, the creatures in these various categories constitute the entire world of living beings from devas and demons through the various classes of ancestors, humans, animals, and plants, all of whom are part of "this terrible cycle of transmigration of living beings, which moves relentlessly on and on" (1.50). These creatures are nonetheless not the direct products of a single creator, but trace their origins back to different Prajapatis. Creation for the first time thus branches out into lineages emitted from different rsis in their role as Prajapatis, so that one can say that the existence of separate lineages itself has its origin with the rsis.

This role of the rsis in creating lineages is an important issue for Manu, which returns to the rsis and their lineages again in Chapter Three. There is obviously no place in Manu's scheme for the rsis -- or at least these ten rsis -- to be considered divinized humans. Whatever the earlier cultural/historical status of rsis may have been at the time of the Rig Veda, these ten rsis have been raised by the time of Manu -- or in Manu itself -- to a metaphysical status not only higher than humans or even ancestors but higher than the devas themselves, all of whom they create in their role as Prajapatis. They are not, however, equal, since their lineages contain different categories of living beings. By raising these rsis to the level of creators, Manu has thus made them somewhat problematical as founders of Brahmanical lineages. It is this problem that Manu addresses in Chapter Three, which deals with regulations for householders and the performance of śraddha rituals for departed ancestors.

Manu begins its discussion of śraddha with the question of whom should be invited to attend and be fed at the ritual (3.125-191), and then turns to the question of the ancestors themselves who are, Manu says, "the deities of ancient times, free from anger, intent upon purification, always chaste" (3.192). Even such "deities," however, had a birth, according to Manu (3.193), as was earlier described in the account of creation. Repeating the main outline of that account, Manu reaffirms that "the various groups of ancestors are traditionally said to be sons of all those sages, beginning with Marici, who are themselves the offspring of Manu, the child of the God of the Golden Womb [Hiranyagarbha]" (3.194).

Apart from its special focus on the ancestors, who were earlier listed in 1.36 as only one of the numerous emissions of the ṛsis, Manu's account so far adds nothing new. At this point, however, Manu introduces a host of new details that were not presented in the earlier brief report of the ancestors' origin. Where Manu 1.36 merely lists "the several classes of the ancestors" among the many products of the ṛsis' creative effort, Manu 3.195-200 now gives a complex description of the various classes of ancestors and their relations to later lineages. This new account, moreover, is not just an expansion of the category of "the classes of ancestors"; it is a substantial revision of the earlier creation account and gives a much more important role to the ancestors in creation.

Manu 1.36 ff. says that the ten ṛsis "emitted seven other Manus who had immeasurable brilliant energy, and the devas and the troops of the devas, and the great ṛsis who had boundless energy, and yaksas and raksasas and pisacas, and Gandharvas and apsarases and Asuras, and Nagas and snakes and supernatural birds, and the several classes of the ancestors, and lightning, thunderbolts, and clouds,...rainbows, comets, whirlwinds, and meteors, and the

higher and lower celestial lights, quasi-men [kinnaras], monkeys, fish, and various kinds of birds, livestock, wild animals and humans, beasts of prey, animals with two rows of teeth [i.e., equines], worms, bugs, [etc.], and various stationary things [i.e., plants]" (1.36-40). There is a kind of hierarchy in this list in the sense that it begins with the seven Manus and the devas and ends with plants, but the listing is almost certainly not intended as a detailed ranking of all living beings -- not given the location of humans after monkeys, fish, birds, livestock, and wild animals, and even the more exalted ancestors after demons, Nagas, and snakes. It is clear that all of these beings came from the ten rsis, but the sequence of their emission, their relative ranking, and the roles of individual rsis in their creation are left uncertain.

By contrast, the account in Manu 194-200 identifies specific classes of ancestors as the "sons" of specific rsis, each of whom creates a different set of beings, and thus not only places the ancestors just below the tapas-empowered rsis in the creation process but makes them the ancestors of many non-human beings including devas and demons. Manu introduces in this context a variety of names for the various classes of ancestors that indicate different ritual practices, perhaps reflecting different family or clan traditions (see Hillebrandt, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 255). These ancestral classes are then further identified as the "sons" of specific rsis and as the ancestors of various categories of beings: devas, demons and demi-gods (Asuras, Danavas, Yaksas, etc.), Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras. The names given to the classes of ancestors come mainly from the Vedic samhitas, including six out of the eleven from the Rig Veda, but only a few of the names originally referred to departed ancestors or rites for the dead as one might expect in the content of Manu's discussion of the sraddha ritual. Instead, Manu designates the different classes of ancestors

in terms of their different types or degrees of participation in Vedic rituals, using the Vedic ritual vocabulary in an apparently original way to name ancestral groups.

The connection of these ancestral groups or classes to some -- but not all -- of the ten creator rsis is also apparently original with Manu, as is their role as "sons" of the rsis and thus the ancestors of devas and demons as well as humans. Manu's presentation of this complex scheme, moreover, is both sketchy and ambiguous, leaving many unanswered questions about its meaning. There are, however, a logic and a purpose to the scheme that become more clear when it is viewed in terms of its overall structure.

The scheme has four basic components: the classes of ancestors are named; the ancestral classes are connected to specific rsis; various classes are specified as the ancestors of particular categories of beings; and the classes which should be assigned as ancestors only to Brahmins (and not to other varnas) are then listed. Manu's presentation of its scheme is not this orderly, and its unresolved ambiguities leave room for varying interpretations. Allowing for some uncertainty, however, the basic points of Manu's position on the ancestors are as follows:

- a) the Somasads (the "Soma-seated") are the offspring of Viraj with no intervening rsi, and are the ancestors of the Sadhyas (a class of divine beings);
- b) the Agnisvattas (the "Tasted-by-Fire") are the sons of the rsi Marici and the ancestors of the devas;

- c) the Barhisads (the "Seated-on-Sacrificial-Grass [barhis]") are the children of the rsi Atri and the ancestors of the Asuras, Danavas, Yaksas, Gandharvas, snakes, Raksasas, supernatural birds, and quasi-men;
- d) the Somapas (the "Soma-drinkers") are the sons of Kavi and the ancestors of the Brahmins;
- e) the Havirbhujes (the "Oblation [havis]-Eaters"), also called Havismants ("Possessing an Oblation"), are the issue of the rsi Angiras and the ancestors of the Ksatriyas;
- f) the Aiyapas (the "Drinkers-of-Melted-Butter") come from the rsi Pulastya and are the ancestors of the Vaisyas;
- g) the Sukalins ("Those-who-have-a-Good-Time [from kala, 'time']," or possibly "Those-who-are-Very-Dark [from kala, 'dark']") are the sons of the rsi Vasistha and the ancestors of the Sudras;
- h) and the classes that are to be assigned as ancestors only to Brahmins are
 - 1) the Agnidagdhas (the "Fire-burnt") [identified in Rig Veda 10.15.14 as those who are cremated on a funeral pile], probably the same as the Barhisads, who are described in the Taittiriya Brahmana as yajvanas ("sacrificers") in contrast to the Agnisvattas who were ayajvanas ("non-sacrificers") and grhamedhins ("performers of domestic rituals [only]") (see Hillebrandt, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 416),
 - 2) the Anagnidagdhas (the "Non-fire-burnt") [identified in Rig Veda 10.15.14 as those who are not cremated on a funeral pile, but are buried], probably the same as the Agnisvattas described in the Taittiriya Brahmana as "non-sacrificers" (idem),

- 3) the "sons of Kavi," the Somapas or "Soma-drinkers,"
- 4) the Barhisads (the "Seated-on-Sacrificial-Grass") [see 1) above],
- 5) the Agnisvattas (the "Tasted-by-Fire") [see 2) above],
- 6) and the Saumyas ("Those-connected-with-Soma"), probably the same as the Somapas ("Soma-drinkers") who are sons of Kavi and explicitly (in Manu 3.197) the ancestors of Brahmins.

Having laid out this scheme in 3.194-199, Manu concludes with the statement that "from the rsis the ancestors are born, and from the ancestors come devas and humans. But from the devas comes the entire universe of living beings, both moving and still, in order" (3.200-201). Just a little water in silver cups, Manu adds, if given to the ancestors with faith [sraddha], "procures an incorruptible reward," so "it is more important for the twice-born to perform rituals to the ancestors than to perform rituals to the gods" (3.202-203).

It is hard to know what to make of the statement in 3.201 that "the entire universe of living beings" comes from the devas, given the claim in Manu 1.35-40 that the ten rsis emitted not only the devas but all other categories of living beings, and the creator Manu's statement that "this whole (universe), stationary and moving, was created by those great-souled ones at my command through the use of tapas" (1.41). Manu 3.201 also seems incompatible with the verses that come just before it which identify the Agnisvattas as sons of Marici and ancestors of the devas, but which identify other ancestral classes as sons of other rsis and as the ancestors of the Asuras, Danavas, and other classes of demons and demigods and of the Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras. These seeming inconsistencies can no doubt be resolved in some way, as later commentators must have had to do. The fact that they exist at all, however,

suggests not only that the authors of Manu were not careful metaphysicians, as was noted earlier, but that the details of creation after the rsis and ancestors were not of major concern to them. What was of concern, we may assume from their care to achieve it, was ensuring the place of the rsis and their related ancestor classes prior to the various categories of beings such as devas, Asuras, and humans in the creation process -- i.e., ensuring that the rsis and ancestors were at the beginning of every lineage no matter how it evolved after them.

There is no doubt that Manu achieves this goal, establishing the rsis and ancestral classes just below Brahma's creative agent Manu and above the level of creation that brings forth the devas and various categories of living beings. In doing so, however, Manu allocates very different roles to the various rsis it includes in its group of ten Prajapatis ("Lords of Creatures"). Manu 1.36-41 avoids this by treating the ten rsis/Prajapatis as a collective unit of "great-souled ones" who create the whole universe through the use of tapas (1.41), but Manu 3.194-198 assigns quite distinct creative functions to particular rsis and their associated classes of ancestors -- and none, at least by name, to others. The effect is to establish, or at least imply, a hierarchy of the rsis and ancestors based on the relative status of what they create or -- in the case of those not specifically named there as creators -- their non-involvement in the important aspects of creation that appear in 3.194-198.

If we look at Manu's account from this last perspective, it is apparent that in fact only five of the ten rsis listed in Manu 1.35 are mentioned by name in Manu 3.194-198: Marici, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, and Vasistha. Marici's sons, the ancestral class known as Agnisvattas, are the ancestors of the devas; Atri's children, the Barhisads, are the ancestors of the Asuras, Danavas, etc.: Angiras'

issue, the Havirbhujes or Havismants, are the ancestors of the Ksatriyas; Pulastya's issue, the Ajyapas, are the ancestors of the Vaisyas; and Vasistha's sons, the Sukalins, are the ancestors of the Sudras. There is no mention by name, however, of the rsis Pulaha, Kratu, Pracetas, Bhrgu, or Narada, and the Somapas, the only explicitly stated ancestors of the Brahmins, are said to be the sons not of any rsi identified by his personal name but as sons of Kavi -- literally "Poet" or "Wise Man," and therefore not a name but a title or description.

Looked at from this perspective, Manu's account of the rsis and their related ancestor classes and lineages reveals a host of problems. Why, for example, are five of the ten rsis listed in 1.35 omitted from the account in 3.194-199, including the rsi Bhrgu? The Laws of Manu is presented as the teachings of the creator Manu to a group of sages, with Manu as the narrator through the initial account of creation. In 1.58, however, Manu says that he has already passed on his teachings to "Marici and the other hermits (munis)," and he tells the assembled sages that Bhrgu -- who is one of those who have been so instructed -- "will let you hear this teaching and leave nothing out" (1.59). Beginning with 1.60, the narrator of the rest of The Laws of Manu is thus not Manu himself but Bhrgu, whose repetition of Manu's teaching includes of course the discussion of the rsis and ancestors in Chapter Three.

But if the rsi Bhrgu is Manu's chosen spokesman as the narrator of Chapter Three, are we nonetheless to believe that Bhrgu is not considered a legitimate ancestor of Brahmins in those same teachings? What does this say about Bhrgu and his Bhargava descendants who have such a prominent place in the Mahabharata? A similar question might be asked about Vasistha, another of the ten rsis in 1.35, who appears in Manu 3.194-199 only in the statement that his sons, the Sukalins, are the ancestors of the Sudras.

Vasistha, however, like Bhrgu and the Bhargavas, has a very important place in the Mahabharata not only in his own right as the household priest to both the Ikshvaku and Paurava/Bharata dynasties but as the grandfather of Parasara and thus great-grandfather of Krisna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the author of the Epic. Is Vasistha also not considered by Manu a legitimate ancestor of Brahmins, despite these prominent descendants? Or, to turn the question around, does the fact that Vasistha is the father of the Sukalins, the ancestors of the Sudras, mean that all of Vasistha's descendants are necessarily Sudras -- including Vyasa, the biological father of both Dhrtarastra and Pandu in the Mahabharata?

Since it is the ambiguity of Manu that raises these questions, we would not expect that same text to answer them directly. What we find instead is evidence that points -- as might be expected -- in different directions, reflecting the ambiguity of Manu's position. There does seem to be something not quite legitimate about Bhrgu and Vasistha and their descendants, in contrast both to the other rsis mentioned in 3.194-199 and to those who in addition to Bhrgu go unmentioned. The rsis in the latter category -- Pulaha, Kratu, Pracetas, and Narada -- seem to be unproblematic, despite the fact that like Bhrgu they are not mentioned in Manu 3.194-199. Pracetas appears in the Mahabharata as a primary creator with a creative role somewhat similar to that of Manu in The Laws of Manu (see Mbh 1.1.31 and 1.70.3-4), and Pulaha, Kratu, and Narada appear in the Epic as divine rsis who -- in the manner of their kind -- come on the scene in various contexts to teach, participate in festivities, etc., and then go away. What seems to distinguish them there as well as in Manu is that they are not represented as founders of a particular family or lineage whose members compete with other lineages in a social context.

Bhrgu, by contrast, although also not named in Manu 3.194-199 as the creator of a lineage, is singled out to be the narrator of most of the Laws of Manu as the spokesman for Manu himself. More importantly, we may assume, Bhrgu was the ancestral founder of the line of assertive Bhargava Brahmins who gained such prominence in the post-bardic Mahabharata, a fact unmentioned in Manu but one that could hardly have been unknown to its authors. The Laws of Manu, which is presented as the teachings of the creator Manu, understandably does not cite other texts directly in support of that teaching and makes no explicit reference to the Mahabharata. It does, however make indirect reference to a number of stories and events that appear in the Mahabharata, including at least one unambiguous reference to Bhrgu's cursing Agni to be omnivorous (Manu 9.314; cf. Mbh 1.6 and 12.329.43) and a possible reference to the birth of Ksatriyas from Brahmins after the Bhargava Parasurama destroyed the previous Ksatriyas (Manu 9.320-321; cf. Mbh 1.98) -- both of these latter Bhrgu-related references coming in the context of an argument for the power of Brahmins. Whether or not the authors of Manu knew the Mahabharata in the Bhargava-edited form in which we know it, they thus knew many of the stories that are found in the Epic -- or their antecedent Vedic versions -- and knew Bhrgu as a powerful Brahmin.

Much the same can be said of Vasistha, who appears in Manu 1.35 as one of the ten creator rsis and in 3.197-198 as the rsi whose "sons," the Sukalins, are the ancestors of the Sudras -- the varna or class that is denied access to the Vedas. Elsewhere in Manu, however, Vasistha appears as a Brahmin priest and Vedic sage who is identified in 9.23 as the husband of the lowly-born Aksamala (better known in the Mahabharata and Puranas as Arundhati), mentioned both indirectly (in 7.41) and directly (in 8.110) in

connection with King Sudas, and cited in 11.250 in a passage that praises the purifying power of "the hymn of Vasistha" [Rig Veda 7.80]. The connection of Vasistha with Sudas is especially significant, because it indicates a definite knowledge by Manu's authors of Sudas' role in the deaths of Vasistha's son Sakti (the context of the reference in 7.41) and of his hundred other sons (the context of Vasistha's oath referred to in 8.110) -- episodes that have an important place in the famous conflict between Vasistha and Sudas' family priest Visvamitra. Visvamitra, Vasistha's legendary protagonist, also appears in Manu in mostly indirect references: he was the agent of Sudas' downfall (referred to in 7.41) in the aftermath of Sudas' prideful killing of Vasistha's son Sakti, the "son of [King] Gadhi" in 7.42 whose powerful tapas transformed him from a Ksatriya to a Brahman, and the prime example of those Brahmans referred to in 9.315 "who, when angered, could create other worlds," and he is cited by name in 10.108 as the exemplary dharma-knowing Brahman who, "distressed by hunger," "set out to eat the hindquarters of a dog which he received from the hands of a 'Fierce' Untouchable [Candala]."

As in the case of Bhrgu, most of these references in Manu to both Vasistha and Visvamitra can be traced to Vedic sources. There is thus no clear evidence that the authors of Manu knew the forms of the stories of Vasistha, Visvamitra, and their conflict that are told at length in Mahabharata 1.165-168 and are frequently cited elsewhere in the Epic. It is clear, however, that they knew at least the Vedic versions of the stories that they refer to, and that they assumed a familiarity with these stories and their cast of characters on the part of those to whom Manu was addressed. It is also clear that they knew Vasistha and Visvamitra as powerful Brahmans competing in a social/historical context, and that at least Vasistha was known as the founder of a lineage.

Visvamitra, despite the attention he receives elsewhere in Manu, is not included in Manu's list of ten creator rsis in 1.35 and is thus not associated with an ancestor class or their descendants in 3.194-199. Visvamitra's exclusion from the list of ten rsis is almost a logical necessity, given Manu's view that these rsis were emitted directly from the tapas-powered Manu himself (1.34) and -- by contrast -- Manu's designation of Visvamitra as "the son of Gadhi" in 7.42 for the purpose of praising his transformation from a Ksatriya prince to a Brahman by means of tapas. Visvamitra may have the power to create other worlds, as indicated in 9.315, but in this world he was born as the son of the Ksatriya king Gadhi. The Mahabharata (1.165 and 3.115) says that Gadhi ruled in Kanyakubja, and the later Puranic genealogies place him in the branch of the Lunar Dynasty that descended from Pururavas' son Amavasū, but there is no way to tell whether the authors of Manu knew either these traditions or the Mahabharata stories that not only link Visvamitra with Gadhi and Vasistha (Mbh 1.165-168) but describe how his daughter Sakuntala became the ancestress of the Bharata-Kuru line (1.65-69) and his Ksatriya sister Satyawati became the mother of the Brahman sage Jamadagni and thus the grandmother of the warlike Parasurama through her marriage to the Bhargava priest Rcika (Mbh 3.115-117). What is clear is that Manu's authors in any case had good reasons to exclude Visvamitra from their list of ten creator rsis, although he does appear as a rsi and founder of a gotra lineage elsewhere alongside his rival Vasistha and the priestly Jamadagni (who is, in the Mahabharata account in 3.115, Visvamitra's nephew and contemporary).

Both Visvamitra and Vasistha, as well as Jamadagni (but not Bhrgu), are included among the seven rsis along with Bharadvaja, Gautama, Atri, and Kasyapa in the Baudhayana-Srauta-Sutra, which identifies these seven plus

Agastya as the founders of the eight gotras (Kane, History of Dharmasastra, Vol. II, p. 483). The same list appears in the Hiranyakesiya-Srauta-Sutra (Hillebrandt, Vedic Mythology, Vol. II, p. 417), but other sources -- including Manu and the Mahabharata -- have very different lists. Of the seven rsis plus Agastya listed by Baudhayana and Hiranyakesin, only Atri and Vasistha appear among the twenty-one Prajapatis in Mahabharata 1.1, only Atri is listed as one of the six "sons of Brahma" in Mahabharata 1.60.4, only Vasistha and Kasyapa are included in the set of four original founders of gotras in Mahabharata 12.297 (Kane, op.cit., p. 489; the same set of four is implied in Mahabharata 3.115.2), and only Atri and Vasistha are in Manu's list of ten rsis. Only three of the eight Baudhayana-Hiranyakesin rsis-plus-Agastya -- Atri, Vasistha, and Kasyapa -- thus appear on any of the corresponding lists of creator or gotra-founding rsis, Prajapatis, or "sons of Brahma" in the Mahabharata and Manu, while five of the Baudhayana-Hiranyakesin list of eight -- Visvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvaja, Gautama, and Agastya -- appear on none of the Mahabharata-Manu lists.

By contrast with this rather startling lack of correlation, the three Mahabharata lists and Manu have a significant degree of similarity. Of the ten rsis named by Manu, for example, only Pracetas and Narada do not appear on any of the three Mahabharata lists, while each of the remaining eight rsis appears on at least two of these lists -- though all eight appear together only on the list of twenty-one Prajapatis in Mahabharata 1.1. Pracetas, moreover, although not listed as one of the twenty-one Prajapatis, is identified in 1.1.30 as the original creator (i.e., as Brahma), whose son Daksa had seven sons from whom came the twenty-one Prajapatis; Pracetas is thus not just one of the Prajapatis, but the ultimate progenitor of all of them, in Mahabharata 1.1. This leaves Narada as the only rsi in Manu 1.35 who is not also considered a creator

in the Mahabharata, although even he is recognized in the Epic as a "divine rsi" and has an important role as a teacher in such passages as Mahabharata 1.200-204, 2.5-11, and 3.80-83.

Apart from Pracetas and Narada, the remaining eight rsis in Manu 1.35 all appear on at least two of the three Mahabharata lists, as noted above. Atri, who also appears on the Baudhayana-Hiranyakesin list of eight gotra-founding rsis, is one of the six rsis on Manu's list along with Marici, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu who appear as six of the twenty-one Prajapatis in Mahabharata 1.1 and as the six sons of Brahma in Mahabharata 1.59.10 and 1.60.4. Vasistha, the other of Manu's rsis on the Baudhayana-Hiranyakesin list, is one of the twenty-one Prajapatis in Mahabharata 1.1 and the founder of one of the four original gotras along with Angiras, Kasyapa, and Bhrgu in 3.115.2 and 12.97, but not one of the six sons of Brahma in 1.59.10 and 1.60.4.

Only Angiras appears both in Manu's list and on all of the Mahabharata lists. Bhrgu, however, while not listed among the six "sons of Brahma" in Mahabharata 1.59.10 and 1.60.4 (the only set of Mahabharata creator rsis that does not include him), is described a few verses later in 1.60.40 as having "issued forth by breaking open Brahma's heart" and as begetting two prominent sons: an older son, Sukra, and a younger son, Cyavana. Sukra, identified as "a planet" [Venus] who "circles the world presiding over rain and drought, fear and relief from fear, for the conduct of life in the three worlds" (1.60.41), was also "a master of Yoga" who "became the sagacious guru of the Daityas [Asuras, Danavas, etc.; see 1.59.10-38 and 1.71.5-24] as well as the Gods" (1.60.42); the second son, Cyavana, married Manu's daughter Arusi and had a son named Aurva [see 1.169-171] whose son in turn was Roika, father of the priestly sage Jamadagni [one of the gotra-founding rsis in the Baudhayana-

Hiranyakesin list] and grandfather of Jamadagni's son Parasurama (1.60.43-49). If Bhrgu is not one of the six "sons of Brahma" in 1.60.4, he is thus given at least equivalent status later in the same chapter (i.e., 1.60) as one who issued directly from Brahma's heart, fathered two illustrious sons (one a planet and guru to both Asuras and Gods, the other the founder of a great lineage), and -- we are told in 1.60.37 -- gave his name to the "Bhrgu wing" of the Gods. Since he is also one of the twenty-one Prajapatis in Mahabharata 1.1 and one of the founders of the four original gotras in 3.115.2 and 12.297, he ranks alongside Angiras as one of the two most frequently named creator rsis in the lists that appear in the Mahabharata and Manu.

We can assume that much of the enhancement of Bhrgu's status in the Mahabharata, as in the account of his origin from Brahma and the greatness of his sons in 1.60, is the work of Bhargava editors who added Bhrgu-related material to the earlier epic. These additions, along with the changes in lists of rsis generally, remind us that the status of particular rsis is not an abstract issue; for those who identify themselves by their lineage, the recognition and legitimation of their founder is a matter of serious concern. The inclusion or exclusion of one's gotra-founding rsi from authoritative lists would have social consequences, but the reverse also would be true: i.e., the social fortune of a gotra historically would affect the status of its founder. It is likely, therefore, that the differences we see in the various lists of rsis reflect at least in part the rising or falling socio-religious status of the related lineages. If this is so, then we would expect that the lineages not only of Bhrgu but also of Angiras -- the two rsis most frequently cited in the Manu and Mahabharata lists -- would be correspondingly influential or numerous at the social level.

There is evidence for this correspondence in the presence of Jamadagni as a descendant of Bhrigu in Mahabharata 1.60.46-49, a passage that helps us understand the role of both Bhrigu and Angiras in the formation of gotras and lineages. Jamadagni is one of the eight gotra-founding rsis in the lists that are found in the Srauta Sutras of Baudhayana and Hiranyakesin, but neither Bhrigu nor Angiras is recognized in these identical lists as the founder of a gotra. By the time of the Bhargava-edited Mahabharata 1.60.40 ff., however, Bhrigu is described as a rsi who issued directly from Brahma's heart and as the founder of a lineage defined by his younger son Cyavana, his grandson Aurva, his great-grandson Rcika, and his great-great-grandson Jamadagni, father of Parasurama. Jamadagni, once a gotra-founding rsi, has thus been transformed into a rsi in the gotra lineage of Bhrigu, and not even a senior one at that. To underscore this point, 1.60.48-49 adds the statement that "Aurva had a hundred sons before Jamadagni, who in turn had thousands of sons, a proliferation of Bhrigus." Jamadagni might be the only great-great-grandson of Bhrigu who is singled out by name, but he was only one of a cast of thousands.

The eventual result of such upgrading of Bhrigu in the Mahabharata and elsewhere was that Bhrigu replaced Jamadagni in the lists of primary gotra-founding creator rsis, and Jamadagni was relegated to being the founder of a sub-set of the Bhargava lineage (Kane, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 488, 490, 1265). Two other rsis on the Baudhayana-Hiranyakesin list, Bharadvaja and Gautama, were similarly absorbed into the lineage headed by Angiras and became the namesake founders of two sub-sets (paksas) of the Angirases (Kane, ibid., pp. 486, 489-490, 1263-4). Kasyapa also, while retaining a separate lineage as one of the four original gotra-founders in Mahabharata 3.115.2 and 12.297, is described in Mahabharata 1.60.33 as the son of Marici and the one from whom

both devas and Asuras were born -- creative functions that Manu 3.195-199 divides between the sons of Marici (ancestors of the devas) and the sons of Atri (ancestors of the Asuras, Danavas, etc.), two of the three ancestor classes along with the Somapas or "sons of Kavi" that Manu 3.199 assigns only to Brahmins.

It is obvious from these shifts in the roles and status of various rsis that neither the lineages of Brahman families nor the identities, relationships, or even the relative order of their founders were firmly fixed in the period between the Baudhayana and Hiranyakesiya Srauta Sutras on the one hand and the Mahabharata and Manu on the other. Of the eight gotra-founding rsis (including Agastya) cited by Baudhayana, only Atri and Vasistha appear on Manu's list of ten creator rsis and only Kasyapa and Vasistha are on the list of four original gotra-founders in Mahabharata 3.115.2 and 12.297. Neither the Mahabharata nor Manu explains the additions and omissions in their lists directly, although the inclusion of Jamadagni in Bhrgu's family line in Mahabharata 1.60.46-49 shows what happened to at least this particular earlier rsi. From the evidence of their various lists, which show both general similarity and a number of specific differences, the Mahabharata and Manu thus seem to represent a stage of significant change from the earlier Baudhayana-Hiranyakesin view of the most important rsis, but not a stage of general agreement on an overall system of gotra formation in relation to an established group of founding rsis.

In the strictest sense, that final stage of general agreement was never reached because the number of actual gotras in Brahmanical society made a single "official" system impossible in the absence of any central authority to enforce uniformity. Brahmanical sources themselves estimate -- and enumerate -- anywhere from 500 to 5,000 gotras within the society at large, and even Baudhayana says in apparent frustration that already by his time there were

"millions of gotras" (Kane, op. cit., Vol. 11, p. 489). Restricting the number of gotras was therefore not a practical solution to the problem of Brahmanical legitimacy, because the term "gotra" in principle designated any group or family that traced descent in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor (Kane, op. cit., p. 484) -- and that ancestor, though typically someone of renown, need not be a Vedic rsi. There was thus a wide gap between the relatively few recognized gotra-founding rsis -- no matter which list one considered -- and the hundreds or thousands of actual gotras in the society. This gap, moreover, continued to increase with the constant formation of new gotras on the one hand and -- on the other hand -- the tendency seen in the Mahabharata and Manu to elevate the most prominent rsis from their earlier role as founders of human gotra lineages to a new status as Prajapatis or cosmic rsis who created all living beings.

The solution to this increasingly remote connection between gotras and rsis was to interpose a formal structure of pravaras between the traditional gotra-founding rsis and the socially existing gotras. The term "pravara" literally means "choosing" or "invoking," and its usage in this context comes from the practice of invoking Agni to carry the offerings of a sacrificer to the devas by calling to his attention the names of the sacrificer's illustrious ancestral rsis who in former times had similarly invoked Agni for this purpose (Kane, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 482). The term pravara thus came to denote one or more illustrious rsis who were ancestors of a sacrificer, and in that sense pravara became synonymous with the terms arseya or arsa that were used as early as the Rig Veda to designate the ancestral rsis referred to in the invocation of Agni: "I invoke Agni just as Aurva, Bhrgu and Apanavana did" (Rig Veda 8.102.4; Kane, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 482 and 486-7). And since the so-called "pravara sages" or the rsis who

confirmed a sacrificer's arseya were understood to be specifically (and necessarily, for sacrificial purposes) ancestors of the sacrificer, the term pravara came to designate more generally the particular set of ancestral rsis that distinguishes the founder of one gotra lineage from another (Kane, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 486). Each individual gotra was thus defined in terms of an unbroken male lineage stemming from a designated ancestor who in turn acknowledged a specific set of pravara rsis as his ancestors. This specific set of one, two, three, or five rsis -- but never four or more than five -- constituted the pravara of that gotra and defined its difference from other gotras for all ritual purposes including marriage (Kane, ibid., p. 482).

The rsis who constitute a pravara must all be "rsis of mantras" (i.e., they must be named in Vedic mantras), and so the number of pravara rsis is limited (Kane, ibid., p. 492). The number of possible pravaras is therefore limited as well. There are differences between authorities on the names of various pravaras, the rsis who constitute them, and the sequence in which the rsis are listed within the pravaras, but the accepted standard is a set of forty-nine pravaras to which all of the hundreds or thousands of gotras are assigned. These 49 pravaras are then in turn arranged into groups according to their founding rsi, whose name (with one exception) heads the list of rsis who constitute the pravaras within his group. Seven rsis are given the status of founding rsis within this system, five of whom (Agastya, Atri, Kasyapa, Vasistha, and Visvamitra) appear on Baudhayana's list of the seven rsis plus Agastya who were founders of the eight original gotras. The remaining three rsis on Baudhayana's list (Jamadagni, Bharadvaja, and Gautama) are not considered primary founding rsis in the pravara system, but instead are designated as founders of sub-groups within the groups headed by Angiras and Bhrgu: the

Jamadagni sub-group of the Bhrgus, and the Gautama and Bharadvaja sub-groups of the Angirasas.

The forty-nine pravaras are not evenly divided between the seven main groups. The Agastyas have only three pravaras, and the Atris, Kasyapas, and Vasisthas each have only four. The Angirasas, however, have seventeen pravaras divided between the Gautama sub-group (seven), the Bharadvaja sub-group (four), and the Angirasas proper (six); the Bhrgus have seven pravaras divided between the Jamadagni sub-group (two) and the non-Jamadagni sub-group or Bhrgus proper (five); and the Visvamitras have ten pravaras. The system as a whole therefore has the following structure with the groups listed in the order of decreasing numbers of pravaras and with an example of a pravara from each group:

ANGIRAS GROUP (ANGIROGANA) -- 17 PRAVARAS

GAUTAMA SUB-GROUP -- 7 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Angiras-Gautama-Saradvata

BHARADVAJA SUB-GROUP -- 4 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Angiras-Bhrhaspati-Bharadvaja

ANGIRAS SUB-GROUP -- 6 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Angiras-Ajamidha-Kanva

VISVAMITRA GROUP -- 10 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Visvamitra-Astaka-Lohita

BHRGU GROUP (BHRGUGANA) -- 7 PRAVARAS

JAMADAGNI SUB-GROUP -- 2 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Bhrgu-Cyavana-Apnavana-Urva-Jamadagni

NON-JAMADAGNI SUB-GROUP -- 5 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Bhrgu-Vitahavya-Savetasa/Savedasa

ATRI GROUP -- 4 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Atri-Arcananas-Gavisthira

KASYAPA GROUP -- 4 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Kasyapa-Avatsara-Nidhruva

VASISTHA GROUP -- 4 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Vasistha-Sakti-Parasara

AGASTYA GROUP -- 3 PRAVARAS

EXAMPLE: Agastya-Drdhacyuta-Yajnavaha